Second, Updated Edition

The History of the Sen Dynasty of Nepal

Dr. Nawa Raj Subba

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Author's Note

I have been studying the history of the dynasty since school. At that time, I remembered the names of the kings, the expansion of the kingdom, and the incidents of defeat. But I was late to connect the history with the life of the people, their place and the lineage that has been going on till today. For that, only studying is not enough. Time, experience, and questions that arise in the mind are also needed.

I learned a lot while studying Kirat Limbu culture. I also studied the Fayang Samba genealogy and published a book. Still, one thing kept ringing. I felt that the genealogy told me about the ancestors of the Samba community could not be fully understood without looking at the history of the Sen dynasty. That was the beginning of this book.

The Mangena Yak and Lingthang Yak of the Samba community are remembered as associated with the development of the Samaba clan. Manghim has recently been built there with the participation of the people. It was heartening to see such an attachment to the ancestral place. Along with this, the question also arose. The traditional places of worship of Kirat Limbu are often associated with hills, trees, stones and other natural places. How did the tradition of making Manghim come about in a place where there is such a tradition?

To understand that Manghim was built in Lingthang Yak, one must distinguish the ancient religious significance of the site and the history of the building that is now built. The traditional rituals of Kirat Limbu are associated with nature and ancestors. Worship was performed in open spaces in sacred places associated with hills, rocks, forests, mountains, and rivers and streams. In Phedangma, Yeba and Samba maintained a relationship with the ancestors and local deities by reciting the Mundhum. Such pujas did not require a permanent building (Streltsova, 2023; Subba, 2022).

This belief is its own tradition based on the Mundhum. It has also been influenced by ancient Bon philosophy. Bickel's study of the signs related to the Bonn in the Kirati shrines of eastern Nepal and my comparative study of Limbu's animist, shaman and nature worship have shed light on this relationship (Bickel, 2000; Subba, 2022). Therefore, the ancient religious life of the Limbu cannot be understood only in terms of the worship performed inside the building; it has its roots in the sacred geography, ancestors, and Mundhumi rituals.

During the Sen period, there was political and religious contact between the communities of this region. During that time, there was also an exchange of influence between different traditions. The practice of building Manghim buildings in places of worship seems to have spread in the twentieth century with the Satyahangma movement of Phalgunanda Lingden (Gaenszle, 2021). In this way, Lingthang Yak, and the royal sceptre carries the old ancestral memory of the Samba community. The Manghim built there has materialised the collective faith of the community today towards the same place.

There are Shivalingas and tridents in the caves of the Phangphange waterfall in the same area. These objects show the presence of Shaiva worship at that place. Looking at Mangena Yak, the natural place of worship, the cave and the Manghim together, it seems to me that I have found faiths from different times in the same geography. This deepened my interest in exploring the history of the Samba ancestors.

The genealogy became an important source in that discovery. The Sen Chabegu, Yonghang and Lingden Sen genealogies link the ancestors of the respective Limbu dynasty to the Sen (Sen Chabegu genealogy, 2007; Yonghang genealogy, 2011; The Phylogenetic Genealogy of the Phang Samba mentions the ancestral sequence leading up to Abhi Sen, Chudamani Sen and Samba Sereng (Subba, 2024). The memory of the Sen in different genealogies, not limited to a single genealogy, was something that could

not be ignored for me. I began to associate it with the mundhum, place, and historical records.

The Mundhum contains stories of ancestors' journeys, the establishment of places, and the acquisition of authority. In the past, some of the stories seemed to me to be spread over many territories very quickly. After reading the Sen history, I found another way to understand those stories. Putting together the influence of the Sen state, the relationship with the local chief, and the family contacts between the clans, the political background of some of the travel stories begins to unravel. The Mundhum preserves the memory and meaning of the community. The writings note some moments of governance and authority related to that memory. In my study, these two sources speak to each other.

There are also places where this relationship is clearly visible in the historical documents. The Subbas of Chainpur in Rukka of 1908 B.S. claim that they have been in Subbangi since the time of Makwani Sen. Another Rukka of 1852 B.S. remembers the rights given by the Makwani king and the rights of the local Rais. These papers show that even after the end of the Sen rule, the memory of the earlier rights is alive in the administrative records. Therefore, the relationship between the Sen and the local Kirat leadership is not to be found only in the genealogy.

In understanding this relationship, one must also see the local chief's own power. The Sen rulers depended on the help of the Limbu chiefs. The chiefs exercised authority over their territories. The relationship with the Sen state gave recognition to those rights somewhere and sometimes gave them a new administrative form. During this period, there were marriages and social intermingling between families. It is against this background that my conclusion is that the descendants of some Sen-related clans were assimilated into the Limbu society. This does not erase the pre-Sen history of the Kirat Yakthung. In the history of related dynasties like Samba, the chapter of contact with the Sen is also added to the old Yakthung base.

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Biratnagar, Morang, Nepal
2026

Introduction to Book

The Sen dynasty is one of the major dynasties that had a significant impact on the study of Nepali history during the twilight period of the medieval and modern periods. The present book «History of the Sen Dynasty in Nepal» presents an in-depth and authentic analysis of the contribution of the Sen kings to the political, social, economic, and cultural history of Nepal. In this book, the ancestral background of the Sen dynasty, their arrival in Nepal, and the aspects of geographical expansion have been highlighted on the basis of scientific research methodology.

The book covers in detail the establishment of the powerful Sen strongholds such as Makwanpur, Bijayapur, Chaudandi, and Palpa, their political and military strategies, and the interrelationships with the Kathmandu Valley and neighboring states. Along with the role of the Sen dynasty in the federation of twenty-two and twenty-four kingdoms, strategic alliances, and historical turns of regional conflicts, it explains aspects of the Sen-era system of governance, justice and tax systems, society, economy, and infrastructure.

The role played by the Sen kings, especially in the preservation of religion, art, architecture, and literature, reflects the cultural splendor of this period. Finally, the far-reaching legacy of the Sen dynasty in the conflict with the Gorkha kingdom, the fall of the twenty-two-four-state kingdoms, and the process of building modern Nepal is presented in an analytical manner. This book is expected to be an invaluable historical document for history researchers, students, and readers.

1. Background of the Study

1.1 Introduction

As for the origins of the Sen Dynasty, historians are divided. Some of these researchers claim a genealogy leading to the Bengal-based Sen dynasty, which ruled parts of northern India preceding the 13th-century Islamic incursions (Regmi 1975). Some others, however, argue that in Nepal, Sen rulers emerged autonomously as their own regional chieftains and expanded their territory into the eastern Terai and the mid-hills (Stiller, 1993).

Nepal's Sen rule is believed to have begun at strategic junctions in Makwanpur that linked the Terai plains with the highland trade routes. The Sen rulers extended their influence to Bijaypur and Chaudandi, becoming predominant powerbrokers in eastern Nepal through the late 16th century (Sharma 2001),

1.1.1 A. Importance of Sen Dynasty History in Nepalese history.

The rule of Sen dynasty, which governed portions of contemporary Nepal and India during the medieval ages, is recognized as a significant historical resource for understanding the development and ongoing interactions involving numerous ethnic communities, including the Kirat Limbu, Khas, and Aryan people. This analysis considers the historical context and evidence for this claim and references scholarly publications that support the case.

1.1.2 The Spirit of the Sen Dynasty in Historical Context

The Sen dynasty, which began to rise around the 11th century, was influential in eastern Nepal and in parts of present-day Bihar and Bengal in India. They were recognized for their administrative capability and cultural advancement, which contributed their unification for many ethnic groups under their domain (Regmi, 1965). Throughout the dynasty, there were large-scale migrations and cultural changes that defined the ethnicity compositions of the area.

1.1.3 Kirat Limbu & the Sen Dynasty

Members of Kirat Limbu, an indigenous people of the larger Kirat community, are believed to have a long history in the eastern Himalayas. From historical evidence, it can be seen that the Kirat Limbu maintained their cultural identities even after interacting with other groups under the dynasty control of the Sen dynasty. The Sen kings often integrated the local chiefs, primarily Kirat chieftains, into their administration, which allowed for the continuity of Kirat traditions (Chemjong, 1966). It also played a role in the emergence of the Kirat Limbu as a separate ethnic group among the broader Kirat community.

1.1.4 Khas and Sen Dynasty

The Khas people [said to have come from the western regions of Nepal] were another group the Sen dynasty came into contact with. The Khas were mostly pastoralists and warriors; they moved eastward, coming into contact with Sen kings. The administrative practices of the Sen dynasty, based on integration and cooperation, permitted the Khas to inhabit the area and take part in its socio-political life (Bista, 1991). Gradually, the Khas adopted elements of local culture, but kept their own essence.

1.1.5 Sen Dynasty and Aryan influence

The Aryans, who migrated to the Indian subcontinent in ancient times, also reigned in the provinces ruled by the Sen dynasty. Though having a lesser authority compared to the Kirat Limbu and Khas, the Sen rulers encouraged cultural exchange among the Aryan and non-Aryan communities. This led to the gradual incorporation of elements of Aryan culture and religions — especially Hinduism, into the customs of the indigenous people (Thapar, 2002).

1.1.6 Ethnic Evolution Synthesis

We can also see the process of making Kirat Limbu, Khas and Aryan in history as repeated process of mediators and integrators of ethnic groups by Sen dynasty. By fostering an environment of culture sharing and an inclusion in the administration, the Sen monarchs an ally of these tribes to flourish and develop within their kingdom. This historical development highlights the significance of the Sen dynasty within regional ethnical and cultural evolution.

In Nepalese history, the Sen Dynasty occupies an important place, particularly for the secluded east end of its country. It developed from nowhere: in four centuries starting at the end of 1400s and throughout all 1800s, Sen rulers gradually spread its sway over Makwanpur (Chaudandi) and Bijaypur (Subba, 1999). These represent three of the most advanced areas. Nepalese people generally regard it as an example of good governance that promotes industry and religion, promotes culture, and takes care to regulate administration This juncture in history serves as a transition between the gradually weakening old feudal system and the more recent centralization of power by the Shahs. It is important to understand the influence of the Sen rulers on the socio-political development of Nepal and the many cultural contributions from this branch of nobility.

1.1.7 Political and Military Influence

The Sen kings possessed extraordinary military skills, allowing them to remain strong even when other surrounding states continually exerted pressure on them. They frequently fought against the Khas Mallas from western Nepal, the polities of Limbuwan in the east, and Gorkha Kingdom a potential rival that was developing its own power base (Regmi, 1978). Their strategic location enabled them to control trading routes and levy tolls on merchants traveling through lowland and hill areas.

The most important event in Sen Dynasty history was the battle between it and Prithvi Narayan Shah his family. In 1762, Gorkhalis advanced against it. Right from this point on begins a story of decline for the Sen rulers. Before they had just begun to resist; but Sen Janga Bikram Shah of Bocha had to flee to the shelter provided by his brother, ruler in Kathmandu Valley

under-messenger to withdraw altogether from administration (Stiller, 1993).

1.1.8 Economic Contributions

Under the rule of Sen, country's eastern parts experienced rapid economic growth. Their economy was mainly based on agriculture. The rulers carried out many irrigation projects. They granted land to the farmers. They increased revenue by taxing traders' produce. They implemented various economic policies to test their effectiveness in each village. They imposed heavy taxes, creating pressure on untaxable supplies (Sharma, 2001).

Makwanpur, with its river-crossing geographical location, was a main hub for commerce, linking the flatland India in south to Himalayan trade circuit systems. Transport equipment of every kind was carried on carts drawn by bullocks, mules, horses, and even elephants. Trade in grain, cloth, medicines, and metallic objects was tremendous. The Sen rulers established the systems of safe routes and uniform taxes which enabled trade traffic to flourish in their territories (Regmi, 1978).

1.1.9 Religious and Cultural Patronage

The Sen kings were strong Shaivism (Kapalika) believers and made sacrifices at altars for Shiva. Under their rule, hundreds of temples and religious organizations dedicated to Shiva or the Sanskrit tradition were set up across eastern Nepal (Sharma, 2001). The founding of temples by this dynasty to honor Shiva, Vishnu and other Hindu gods demonstrates its religious convictions.

Moreover, such local indigenous groups as the Limbu and the Rai had their own distinctive religious habits, and some of these were mixed with Hindu features. The Sen rulers established diplomatic ties with them, retaining the old systems of local self-regulation while incorporating elements of orthodox Hindu rule (Stiller, 1993).

1.1.10 Administrative and Judicial Systems

The Sen rulers introduced a number of administrative and judicial inventions which are features to this day of eastern Nepalese polity. Their pattern of absolute monarchy combined with feudalism. The local chiefs and aristocrats (Jimidars) kept law and order, smashing tax (Regmi, 1978). The Sen kings were the highest authority, but they gave power to regional magnates to ease administration of affairs.

They also set up a judiciary, in which the ties between classical Hindu laws and local practices were maintained. The Council of Dharma, as the religious council was called, took part in hearing court martial cases, particularly those about family laws to do with land rights or religious affairs (Sharma, 2001).

Religious oaths and local customs also seem to have played a role in the justice system during the Sen period. In East Limbuwan, there was a Chumlung tradition of community leaders and Tumyhangs gathering to resolve disputes. In such assemblies, rituals such as Samyok Lung Thim were used to make a promise of truth by touching grass and stones. Under the Sen rule, the Limbu leaders were seen to have held positions and judicial powers such as Rai, Subba and Chautaria, so it is possible that the state judicial system and local customary law were intertwined. In this context, the "Dharma Sabha" mentioned in the source can be understood

as a judicial assembly to resolve disputes with the participation of religious oaths, local customs and community elders rather than purely Hindu theological councils.

The Sen Dynasty falls when Prithvi Narayan Shah led a cross-movement that resulted in the removal of powerless emperors to establish Gorkhalis as Nepal's political power. By the mid-18th century, the nearby states like the Sen Kingdoms faced threats to the expansionist policies of Gorkha Kingdom.

In 1762, Makwanpur was captured and Chaudandi and Bijaypur were subsequently annexed by the Gorkhalis, marking the end of the Sen Dynasty in Nepal (Regmi 1975). However, the memory of the Sen dynasty remains rooted in Nepali land. They had a finger (or more precisely several fingers) in building a fair amount of the very fabric of Nepalese society. Certain elements of them—specifically temples, commercial routes, and government modalities —left an indelible impression on subsequent regimes; e.g., the Shah and Rana dynasties (Stiller 1993).

To sum up, Sen Dynasty was not only a regional power or a local power hub, but was one of the gusts of the economic, political and cultural revolutions of Nepal. They here entertained the dual twins of local governance and South Asian regional influences fused as well as expanded at Makwanpur, Chaudandi, Bijaypur. But, their enactments are still writing in this historical moment of Nepal, though all of them perished with the new unified Nepal.

Exploration of Sen dynasty inscriptions and registered properties, land grants etc., in records (for instruction in governance and formal ceremony), generated by the Sen rulers, will provide insight not only to the process of Nepal national-state formation, but also governance and cultural change. It's a much-deserving dynasty of more academic work and recognition in history and is very much part of Nepal's rich and diverse history.

1.2 Objectives of the Book

Sen's dynasty has played a vital role in Nepalese history, politics and society. It emerged as a powerful and strategic ruling dynasty in medieval Nepal in Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and Bijaypur from the 15th to the 18th century (Subba, 1999). The emperors of the Sen dynasty were famous for political stability, economic development, religious patronage and administrative changes.

This book aims to provide a comprehensive study of the Sen rulers, their contributions, their governing system, their economic policies, their contribution to culture and the reasons for their fall. The subject of the Sen Dynasty enables us to explore Nepal's historical development, especially in the eastern regions, to understand the process of Hinduization, and the consequences of the Gorkha unification movement.

The Sen rulers (Prahlad Sen & his descendants) have ruled parts of eastern India for centuries, they have a rich cultural heritage.

1.2.1 The Political Landscape of Eastern Nepal Before unification

The Sen Dynasty played an important role in the affairs of the region before the unification of Nepal. From Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and, eventually, Bijaypur their military strategy,

diplomacy, and administrative policies were implemented. The Sen rulers can give us a good idea about how governance worked in eastern Nepal prior to the expansion of the Gorkhas.

1.2.2 Administrative and Policy Development Analytics

Within this period, the Sen rulers also introduced tax systems, land reforms, and judicial administration. The governance paradigm subsequently affected the Shah and Rana regimes.

1.2.3 Role in Trade and Economic Development

In medieval Nepal, Makwanpur, Chaudandi and Bijaypur were major commercial centers. The Sen kings encouraged trade from the Terai to the Himalayan areas, developed better commercial routes, and created tax laws. As their economic practices are explored, they reflect Nepal's traditional trade connections with both India and Tibet.

1.2.4 Advocacy of Hindu Religion and Cultural Impact

The Sen kings were believers in Hinduism. They built temples, propagated Sanskrit studies and preserved Vedic traditions. Exploration of their religious policies can be significant to understanding the role of the Sen rulers in the Hinduization process of Nepal.

1.2.5 Strife With the Gorkha Kingdom and the Fall of the Sen Dynasty

However, the tussle ripe between Sen and Prithvi Narayan Shah was one of autochthonous episodes in Sen history. In 1762 Gorkha forces captured Makwanpur, gradually pushing out the Sen dynasty kings. The social and technological conflict actually does help us to understand the radicalization of now forces of Gorkha unification and of the regional principalities that are triggered by the unification of the State of Nepal.

1.2.6 Indigenous-People and local communities relationship

The Limbu, Rai (आदिवासी) and other indigenous men who were some of many ethnic groups inhabiting the eastern part of Nepal. Following in the wake of these communities, the Sen monarchs established diplomatic relations, tax privileges, and even cultural connections. Their nomenclature is a unique commentary that documents indigenous autonomy, cultural assimilation, and socio-political dynamics in Nepal.

1.2.7 And these are the goals of this book.

To highlight the administrative, economic, cultural and religious contributions of the Sen kings. The Sen Dynasty in Nepalese History, particularly in this region of the Nepal.

Readings will include historical and contemporary accounts of the political relations between the regional states prior to the unification of Nepal.

Establish a justifiable basis for the study of the role played by the Shah Dynasty in the fall of the Sen Dynasty and the relations between the Sen Dynasty and the Shah monarchs.

And to research the socioeconomic condition of indigenous and rural peoples in Sen's administration.

Thus, the study of the Sen Dynasty was not merely a catalogue of kings and rajyas but also

a study of the political, economic and cultural turmoil of Nepal. Historical development of Nepal is still impacted by how their monarchs negotiated their kingdoms, what kind of economic strategies were adopted and the role of religion in this previously mentioned muck.

Make sense of the Sen kings administrative system, trade networks, and cultural connections — these perspectives allows us to understand the history of Nepal in its totality. This book aims to chronicle and assess the legacy of the Sen rulers as part of Nepal's broader historical development.

1.3 Sources

1.3.1 Utilization of acquired inscriptions, manuscripts, historical records, and oral traditions

For the study of Sen Dynasty in Nepal, we need a sound historical methodology and the research should be based on archeological evidence, manuscripts, historical records, oral traditions and electronic secondary sources. In light of the widely limited access to primary sources, this research relies on the complementary use of inscriptions, royal decrees, chronicles, or narratives of indigenous communities alongside modern secondary sources in inscriptions, including digitized books, databases for online research, archives of scholarly articles, and publications from universities, government and non-government organizations (NGOs). This will give well-researched and comprehensive knowledge on the Sen kings, Sen rule, Sen economy, Sen culture and Sen's downfall.

1.3.2 Different categories of information sources:

Primary and Secondary

1. Inscription (Shilalekh and Tamrapatra)

First-hand accounts of Sen rule come from stone and copperplate inscriptions (Shilalekh and Tamrapatra). These royal edicts and land grants provide information about:

The sen rulers lineage and authenticity.

Major events related to politics and the military. They include land administration, taxation and religious patronage.

Inscriptional evidence gleaned from Sen-period finds relating to Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and Bijaypur trace their systems of land management and diplomatic relations. Many of these inscriptions were written in Sanskrit or Prakrit and became the primary evidence of the growth and consolidation of Sen power.

Example:

A vijaya inscription on copperplate in Bijaypur detailing land donations to religious organizations also indicates that the Sen rulers were patrons of Hindu religious traditions (Regmi, 1975).

2. Scripts, History of Writing and Textual Material

Ancient and medieval handwritten manuscripts hold crucial information about the administration, military campaigns and socio-economic structure of the Sen rulers. These include:

Genealogical records of Sen kings and lineages.

The religious texts were sponsored by the Sen kings, pointing to their support for Hinduism. There are also bureaucratic documents related to tax and administration. The Sen Dynasty has been mentioned in historical texts like the Gopalraj Vamsavali and Dharma Patra of Makwanpur. These Nepali, Sanskrit, and regional dialect sources contributed to reconstructing the Sen history.

Example:

Makwanpur's Dharma Patra: "The Dharma Patra of Makwanpur sheds light on the legal system adopted by Sen kings with judicial principles and dispute resolution system.

3. All accounts written in history and in foreign words

The evidence for the Sen rulers is secondary and is traced via a few Nepalese and foreign chronicles. Such records set the political, military and economic conditions of their time in context. Some key sources include:

"Gorkha Bansavali" (Chronicle of Gorkha), describing the battle between the Sen rulers and the expanding Gorkha Kingdom.

Reports of the British East India Company mentioning Sen rulers in trade and military contexts.

Mughal and Rajput sources, which record the Sen rulers' diplomatic relations as well as economic exchanges with the kingdoms of India.

Example:

In the 18th century, British traders declared that a large number of Indo-Tibetan merchants passed through Makwanpur, corroborating the economic importance of the Sen rulers (Sharma, 2001).

4. The stories are passed down

- in an oral tradition through indigenous perspectives that can draw similarities to earlier European tales featuring magical animals.

Histories of the Sen rulers are also preserved in oral traditions, including folk songs and oral genealogies. Local communities in Makwanpur, Chaudandi and Bijaypur have preserved legends about Sen kings, their administration and battles.

The heroics of Sen rulers have been sung in folk songs, Dohori, and ballads.

Local beliefs and rituals carry the cultural heritage of Sen rule.

Priest-lists recorded by priestly families hint at patterns of Sen succession.

Example:

We have heard stories of the Limbu community of eastern Nepal, who reached an agreement with the Sen rulers to pay tribute and preserve their local autonomy. Such oral histories offer glimpses into the governance style of the Sen rulers in multi-ethnic societies.

1.3.3 Online Secondary Sources Used

We will include secondary sources accessible online to further study the Sen Dynasty, which include:

Google Scholar: Journal articles on Nepalese history and medieval governance.

University Digital Libraries — such as these are research papers, dissertations, and published books and papers from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu University, and other research centers around the world

Govt Publications: Reports and historical documents from the Department of Archaeology, National Archives of Nepal, as well as local government sources.

NGO and International Academic Research: Books produced by research organizations,

NGOs, and historians engaged in Nepalese studies.

Digitized Historical Books: Old manuscripts and chronicles found in digital archives.

No primary historical records exist that allow for a comparative and well-documented study of the Sen rulers; these secondary sources will supplement the primary historical records.

Example:

According to a study in Ludwig F. Stiller's book Prithvi Narayan Shah in the Light of Nepal's Unification (1993 or 1973), the administrative structure of the Sen kings later influenced the Shah and Rana regimes as well (Stiller, 1993).

1.4 Research Approach

This was then followed by several anthropology and environmental studies and discussions on the colonial history of British India and SE Asia and the impact of colonial cave expeditions on the collection and documentation of Southeast Asian caves.

1.4.1 Developmental Comparative Historical Analysis

Checking the accuracy of historical data through inscriptions, manuscripts, and online secondary sources; and

The rulers of Sen: A comparative analysis of their governance structures with contemporary Indian and Nepali dynasties.

1.4.2 Archaeological And Epigraphic Research

Copperplate and stone inscriptions provide treatises on ancient Indian political administration; they help us rebuild the political mechanism and forensic basics of the Sen dynasty. Additionally, Archaeological explorations in temples and fortress sites of the Sen period give rise to architectural styles as well as possible sources of religious tradition, while mapping out strategic forces like defense. These discoveries enrich our knowledge about urban life during the Sen period: how a city was built, very probably its layout and what sort it was. And they help to explain the history of urban evolution: from serving merely soldiers to serving everyone equally, how infrastructure changed.

1.4.3 Ethnographic/Oral History Documentation

Interviewing local historians, religious leaders and indigenous communities. Documenting folk narratives and songs containing information about the Sen rule.

1.4.4 Online Source Validation

Re-exploring peer-reviewed journaling articles in academic base pages. Verifying historical reports on medieval Nepal by government and non-government offices. Reviewing old studies hosted by university repositories.

1.4.5 Challenges in Research

While several sources exist, there are challenges in reconstructing the history of the Sen Dynasty:

Many records are broken, fragmentary or gone due to destruction and warfare, as well as environmental damage. Limited Research & Resources—The Sen rulers are often overshadowed by the Mallas or Shahs in terms of scholarly attention, and many secondary sources can only be found online when seeking more information.

Therefore, this study integrates various resources, ranging from inscriptions to historical manuscripts, oral traditions, and even online research databases, to overcome these limitations and produce a robustly documented history of the Sen dynasty.

In conclusion, the history of the Sen dynasty has sources from a wide variety—inscriptions, manuscripts, chronicles, oral traditions and modern secondary sources on the net. Consequently, by integrating digital tools and traditional research practices, the Sen rulers can

be reaffirmed in terms of their governance, economy, and bluff in universal ethnicity more accurately and closely.

Using Google Scholar, university research databases, government archives and historical reference books, the study attempts to provide an updated and holistic picture of the Sen rulers. As for future research directions, new inscriptions from various parts of Nepal, treaties with neighboring states—historical and comparative study..

Chapter 2: Origins and Rise of the Sen Dynasty

2.1 The Ancestry of the Sen Dynasty

The history of Sen Dynasty of Nepal is of historical interest especially regarding its Kshatriyahood and possible connections to the Sen kings of Bengal (11th–12th century CE). Whereas a few historians claimed the Sen kings were indigenous leaders who arrived there to work out autonomy, others also claim they were related to the Bengali Sen dynasty that ruled the majority of eastern India ahead of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (Majumdar, 1973). Available theories about the origin of the Sen of Nepal are discussed by analyzing historical texts, genealogies, inscriptions and oral traditions pertaining to their Kşatriya identity and possible ties with Bengal.

2.1.1 Sen dynasty Kshatriya lineage

The Sen dynasty of Nepal claimed to the Kshatriya varna (warrior class), and traditionally, the rulers who protected and governed territories in Hindu society belonged to the Kshatriya varna. Several factors determine their Kshatriya legitimacy:

Genealogical Records and Claims to the Throne

Lineage claim of Sen rulers: Those of the Sen dynasty often claimed lineage from the Solar or Lunar dynasties (Suryavanshi or Chandravanshi), the two most revered Kshatriya lineages in Hindu tradition (Regmi, 1975).

− Some sources trace their origin to the Rajput clans of northern India, asserting that they were warriors who came to Nepal and subjugated Makwanpur, Chaudandi and Bijaypur.

Ironically, their land grants (Tamrapatra) and inscriptions describe them as Dharma Patra — that is, protectors of Dharma (Hindu law) and this description is usually assigned to Kshatriya rulers (Sharma, 2001).

2.1.2 Ritual & Religious Practices

The Sen kings, notable patrons of Hindu temples and Brahmins, practiced Vedic rites, yajnas and made donations.

Yajnas (symbolic rituals of kingship) of Rajasuya type among Sen rulers reflect a robust Kshatriya identity, akin to other Hindu monarchs across Bharat (Ray, 1997).

2.1.3 Engagement at the Military and Governance

Sen king rulers, like all other Kshatriya rulers, had a huge military presence and they had expanded their territory and fought against external threats.

They anchor their governmental structure on Hindu law, enshrining their role as Kshatirya enforcers in history.

Therefore, the Sen rulers of Nepal are considered to be Kshatriyas and ruled according to the customs of Hindu warrior and performed rites related to sovereignty. But their precise origins remain in dispute, prompting scholars to seek possible links with Bengal's Sen rulers.

2.1.4 Tentative Links to Sen Rulers of Bengal

The Bengali Sen Dynasty (c. 1095–1230 CE) ruled a large region of Eastern India comprising Bengal, Bihar and parts of Assam. Some of the scholars claim that the Nepali Sen ruler are the descendants of these Bengal Sen rulers who migrated from Bengal to the north after their empire declined due to the Muslim invasion (Majumdar, 1973). A few historical arguments support this connection:

Are Similarity Names and Titles

Common royal titles, for example Maharajadhiraja (great king of kings) and Parambhattaraka (supreme ruler) were shared by Bengal's Sen dynasty and Nepal's Sen rulers.

Both dynasties also widely used the name "Sen" which suggests that they belonged to the same dynasty (Ray, 1997).

And Political Displacement and Migration

The fall of Bengal's Sen raj starts with the conquest of Bengal by Bakhtiayar Khilji in 1204 CE, which led to the eviction of Kshatriya and Brahmin elite (Chattopadhyay, 2003).

Some members of the Sen royal family may have fled towards the eastern Himalayan foothills and settled in Nepal, ruling Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and Bijaypur (Regmi, 1975).

Similarities happen by both cultural and administrative.

The Sen rulers of Bengal and Sen rulers of Nepal also patronized Hindu temples, Sanskrit education and scholarship by Brahmins, indicating common cultural roots.

There were similarities between the taxation system and governance structures of Nepal's Sen dynasty rulers and those prevailing in eastern India during the Sen period.

The similarities have prompted historians to speculate that the Sen rulers of Nepal were heirs to Bengal's Sen kings, or at the very least, were inspired by their reign. On the other hand, some argue that the Nepalese Sen rulers were indigenous kastriyas who simply adopted the Sen nomenclature in line with the prevailing of the period than any direct connection.

2.1.5 The Sen Rulers Were Indigenously Originated: Alternative Theories

Historians disagree on whether they were from a region corresponding roughly to modern-day Bengal or not; some argue their line was a local Nepali warlord line who grew into a dominant chief, while others trace them to Bengal. This view is based on:

Absence of Direct Genealogical Evidence

The absence of any extant direct evidence that connects the Sen rulers of Nepal with the Sen dynasty of Bengal makes their alleged genealogy speculative (Sharma, 2001).

There is no mention of migration from Bengal in Nepal's local historical records and oral tradition.

Political context of Medieval Nepal

During the Medieval period, eastern Nepal was ruled by many clans like Kiratas and many

feudal Lords.

The Sen kings were perhaps local chieftains who grew powerful rather than immigrants from Bengal.

2.1.6 Distinct Regional Identity

Even with cultural similarities, being regional governors, Nepal's Sen rulers fashioned distinctly a regional style of governance, which set it apart from Bengal's administration.

Beyond the more localized nature of their ruling approach, their engagement with the indigenous Limbu and Rai communities suggests an absence external while present domination.

So while the Bengali connection is an interesting theory, the alternative perspective argues that Nepal's Sen rulers evolved within a specifically Himalayan political milieu and are not directly descended from the Bengali Sen kings.

The chapter noted with the debate about whether Nepal's Sen rulers are of Indian heritage. Some historians claim they are descendants of Bengal's Sen dynasty while others assert their roots as Kshatriya rulers from Bengal. The main evidence for the Bengali theory includes:

Common names and titles between both dynasties

Migration from Bengal after Muslim conquest of Bengal (13th Century CE). Cultural and administrative similarity of Bengal with Sen rule of Nepal. However, the indigenous theory emphasizes:

That there are no direct genealogical records connecting Nepal's Sen rulers with Bengal. The independent rule suggested by the local political context of eastern Nepal.

2.1.7 Unique governance patterns and relationships with indigenous peoples

Future research should analyze newly discovered inscriptions, compare historical texts, and conduct linguistic studies to clarify the ancestry of Nepal's Sen rulers. Until then, both migrant and indigenous perspectives remain valid explanations for their Kshatriya origins and historical significance.

2.2 Migration and Establishment in Eastern Nepal.

2.2.1 Background

The migration and settlement of Sen kings in eastern Nepal is a historical study that includes oral traditions, inscriptions, historical writings, and regional sociopolitical elements. While some researchers believe the Sen rulers were native Nepalese, others believe they were northern Indian migrants, possibly from Bengal or Mithila, who eventually established their reign in eastern Nepal. This chapter investigates migration ideas, potential routes, sociopolitical circumstances, and causes that contributed to the rise of the Sen Dynasty in eastern Nepal.

2.2.2 Migration Theories: Origin and Possible Routes

Theories about the migration of the Sen rulers can be essentially classified into two main perspectives:

Migration from North India

Some historians believe that the Sen kings migrated from northern India during the mediaeval period, specifically from Bengal, Mithila, or Uttar Pradesh (Majumdar 1973). The causes of this migration are believed to be:

Political Displacement: When Hindu kingdoms in Bengal and northern India fell to Muslim invasions in the 12th and 13th centuries, many leading families fled to the Himalayan foothills (Chattopadhyay, 2003).

Cultural and linguistic similarities: The Sen kings followed Maithili and Sanskrit traditions, as did the governing elites of Mithila and Bengal (Regmi, 1975).

Administrative Parallels: The governance system of the Sen kings in Nepal was influenced by Bengali and Mithila administrative institutions, demonstrating cultural continuity (Ray, 1997).

Indigenous Evolution and Local Rule.

Another idea holds that the Sen rulers were local warlords or chieftains who progressively consolidated control in eastern Nepal. Arguments for this idea include:

No Direct Migration Records: There is no compelling historical record or inscription to show that the Sen kings migrated from India (Sharma, 2001).

Integration with indigenous Communities: The Sen kings had significant ties to the indigenous Kirat, Limbu, and Rai communities, indicating a gradual rise to power rather than external imposition.

While influenced by northern Indian traditions, the Sen kings established a distinct administrative and cultural identity that was not dependent on Bengal or Mithila.

Hence, although migration from northern India was and is an option, the domestication of the Sen rulers as a new political force in Nepal is just as important.

2.2.3 Political and socioeconomic factors influencing Eastern Nepal settlements.

The rise of the Sen rulers in eastern Nepal was shaped by regional political factors and economic opportunities.

East Nepal and its Strategic Importance

Eastern Nepal was geographically and strategically significant for its fertile farmland, trade routes and fortified terrain. The region offered:

Agricultural production may flourish; Terai and river valley about all green land agriculture flourishes (Regmi, 1975).

Trade and Commerce — The location near Tibet, Bengal, and Mithila facilitated commerce and increased economic power (Chattopadhyay, 2003).

Natural Defense: The hills and mountains were natural defenses guarding it against outside invaders.

Close Ties with Local Communities

The Sen kings formed alliances with the indigenous groups already living in eastern Nepal including the Kirat, Limbu and Rai. These alliances were established on:

Mutual Economic Interests: The Sen kings depended on the Limbu and Kirat people for trade and military aid (Sharma, 2001).

Cultural Integration: The Sen rulers embraced local customs, practices and administrative processes, which led to a unique blend of local (indigenous) and Hindu practices (Ray 1997).

Territorial Expansion — The Sen rulers tightened their control over Makwanpur, Bijaypur and Chaudandi by including local leaders in their government.

Therefore, the Sen dynasty in eastern Nepal was advanced by a combination of migration and administrative adaptation to indigenous political and economic conditions.

2.2.4 Local Rise and Magar Relations

The study of Shrees Magar (2022, p. 24) is useful in favour of local origin. According to him, the Magar rulers who ruled their territories in the Magarat region of western Nepal adopted titles such as 'Sen'. This questions the assumption that the development of the name 'Sen' in Nepal should be understood only from the continuity of the family from outside. But this general explanation cannot be considered evidence of the personal genealogy of each king of Palpa.

The relationship of the Magar society with the monarchy of Palpa is also shown by marriage and political cooperation. Beine (2013) cites the study of Lecont-Tiluin and mentions that Mukund Sen's family had marital relations with the Magar ruling family, and in some historical accounts, Mukund Sen was referred to as the 'Magar king'. This shows that the Sen monarchy cannot be understood by excluding it from the Magar society. This is not to say that the ethnic identity of all the Sen rulers was the same. The lineage, marriage relationship and identity of a ruler with the political community are not the same even if they are related to each other.

2.2.5 Sen Rulers: Government and Administrative Systems

After their establishment, the Sen kings consolidated their rule through a system of administration which drew from the three traditions of — Hindu, indigenous and Northern Indian.

Political Structure

Governance during the Sen's rule was a monarchy and hence, the power was centralized

under the king and de-centralized to regional chieftains.

The King (Maharaja) is the supreme authority, governing over law, the military, and diplomacy.

Provincial Governors (Samantas) — local governors or tribal chiefs who ruled provinces under king's authority (or paid tribute)

The village headmen (Mukhiya) managed local government, tax collection, and dispute resolution.

Policy on Economics

Under the Sen kings, the economy rested on:

Farmers paid some of their output as taxes, therefore augmenting the income for the monarchy.

Trade and Commerce: Eastern Nepal became a commerce centre because of its closeness to Tibet and Bengal (Regmi, 1975).

Hindu religious organizations were given royal grants from land concessions to Temples, therefore supporting the validity of the monarchy (Sharma, 2001).

The Sen kings therefore established a stable government by blending local administrative systems with Hindu political customs.

Sum up

Looking at the available records, genealogies, historical writings, and modern studies about the origin and establishment of the Sena rulers of Nepal, there are mainly two types of explanations.

The first interpretation links the Sens to the dynasties of Bengal, Mithila or North India. In particular, after 1204, the Sen dynasty of Bengal weakened and some of their descendants may have migrated to Nepal after that are found in various genealogies and later histories. However, contemporary records are not sufficient to prove a direct and unbroken lineage between the Sens of Bengal and the Sen rulers of Nepal. Therefore, it is a matter of caution to establish a single lineage continuity based solely on the similarity of the name, royal genealogy or the latest tradition. Such genealogies may also have the purpose of establishing royal legitimacy, Kshatriya identity and social prestige.

The second interpretation gives more importance to the local basis of the Sen rule. In areas such as Makwanpur, Chaudandi and Bijaypur, the Sen state does not appear to be isolated from the local society. They had administrative, political and social relations with the Kirat, Limbu, Rai, Tharu, Koch, Rajbanshi and other local communities. Cooperation with local leaders, Rai, Subba, Chautaria and regional forces was important in the operation of the Sen rule. The local linguistic influence seen in the Syamohar and other records of the Bijayapur area also indicates that the system of governance was adapted to the local social environment.

For this reason, it is not enough to understand the Sen rulers simply as rulers from outside. Similarly, it is not appropriate to conclude without concrete evidence that they originated entirely from the same local community. The available evidence shows that their political identities were formed over time. External clan claims, alliances with local powers, marital

relationships, administrative cooperation, and cultural adaptation may have all played a role in this process.

Therefore, it is more appropriate to study the history of the Sen rulers of Nepal as a multi-layered historical process rather than confine them to a single origin story. The formation and expansion of their kingdom does not seem to have been possible without cooperation, assimilation and adaptation with the local society.

In the coming research, it is necessary to consider the dynastic genealogy as the only evidence and to comparatively study the contemporary inscriptions, syamohar, red seals, copper plates, archaeological materials, linguistic evidence, local genealogy and oral history. Only in this way can a more balanced history of the origin, identity of the Sen dynasty and the political structure they have built in the eastern and central parts of Nepal be written. .

2.3 Early Expansion and Political Consolidation

Nepal's mediaeval history was predominantly shaped by the Sen dynasty particularly plays an important role in the eastern and central regions of Nepal. The political establishment of Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and Bijaypur as major Sen bastions marked the expansion and consolidation of the dynasty. These three centres evolved into these formidable kingdoms that became the bedrock of Sen hegemony in Nepal.

The ruling founders of these states built power through military conquest, strategic alliances, and administrative organization. This chapter explores the emergence of the state of Sen rule in Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and Bijaypur and its major kings and state-building activities. Based on historical texts, inscriptions and secondary scholarly works, the current study reconstructs the Sen Dynasty's initial political processes.

A valley politically known as a Sen territory it was geographically positioned between the Terai plains and the Kathmandu Valley, making it one of the most important valleys of the Sen territories. The kings of Makwanpur retained political independence while negotiating with the Mallas in Kathmandu and Mughal Empire in India.

2.3.1 Early Rulers of Makwanpur

From 14th century, one of the first known Sen kings of Makwanpur was Tula Sen, who is accredited with the establishment of a formidable military base and commerce networks of this region (Regmi, 1975). His successor, Subha Sen, expanded Makwanpur's domination of trade routes between Nepal and India.

Improvement of Makwanpur military defence and economic reform by Tula Sen (first half of the 16th century). Subha Sen (mid-16th century): Responsible for expanding territories and establishing trading connections with India

Politico Economic Influence

The Sen rulers of Makwanpur positioned their kingdom on the trade routes connecting Kathmandu Valley to Chinese and Indian plains (Sharma, 2001) This economic strength helped them continue to dominate politically with neighbouring nations.

Makwanpur's military skill and judgment were clear from its capacity to negotiate with the Mallas and Mughals and defend off foreign invasions. Its rolling plains and fertile valleys made it an agricultural powerhouse.

Chaudandi: A key Sen stronghold in eastern Nepal.

Another prominent Sen kingdom emerged in Nepal's eastern slopes: Chaudandi. It was critical to Sen rule's advance into the Koshi River valley.

2.3.2 Establishment of Chaudandi

The early rulers of Chaudandi are said to be Sen kings who migrated from Makwanpur and established an eastern bastion (Regmi, 1975). Indra Sen and Udyot Sen were particularly important among them:

Indra Sen (16th century) fortified Chaudandi and augmented the local administration.

Udyot Sen (late 16th century): - Diplomatically engaged with Kirat and Limbu chiefs nearby.

Partnership with Indigenous Communities

The Sen rulers of Chaudandi made alliances with the local Kirat lords to consolidate their power. The Kirat and Limbu chiefs, though largely ceremonial, were powerful local leaders, and their allegiance was important to the long-term survival of the Sen administration.

Chaudandi's administrative structure synthesized Hindu administrative traditions with indigenous self-government, enabling the kingdom to maintain political stability despite its ethnic heterogeneity.

2.3.3 Bijaypur: The prominent Centre of Sen Politics

In eastern Nepal, Bijaypur developed into a Sen-ruled state and became the political and cultural hub of the dynasty.

Established Sen Rule in Bijaypur

Lohang Sen primarily settled in Bijaypur, and his expansion of Sen control in the area would lay the groundwork for Sen dominance in the region (Regmi 1975). He appropriated local rulers and established an efficient administrative system.

Lohang Sen (16th century): Defeated indigenous chieftains, but established the Sen administration system in Bijaypur.

Indra Sen II (early 1600s): Promoted Hinduism and economic growth in the area.

Hindu Influence and Cultural Development

Bijaypur rose to become a center of Hindu culture and religious prodigalism. Sen kings promoted Sanskrit education, temple construction, and performance of Hindu rites (Ray, 1997) in order to strengthen their legitimacy.

Brahmins, scholars, and Hindu priests attended royal court, dancing on platforms sprinkled with flowers and willing good fortune on the rulers, which only added to the kingdom's growing reputation as a center of culture and learning.

Expansionism, military, administration

The military apparatus of the Vijeyapur was well-developed, which not only helped the Sen rulers to expand their circuits of power but also to defend their territory.

Fortifications were built defensively to allow areas to repel enemy invasions. A tax structure was based to finance military and administrative expenses. Local chieftains were appointed in the administration to assure loyalty to the Sen kings.

The expansion of Bijaypur eventually brought it into conflict with the Limbus and Kirats, but the Sen rulers retained their hold through a mixture of diplomacy and military force (Sharma, 2001).

To sum up-

The Sen dynasty, the eastern Nepalese rulers, began with the Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and Bijaypur Sen kings. Here are the basics of their rule:

Economic and military strength consolidated Makwanpur's political dominance over of

regional rival states.

Chaudandi's immersion with the neighbouring Kirat and Limbu communities, which guarantees stability and governance.

Bijaypur was a seat of culture and arms and consolidated Sen's grip to the east of Nepal.

The early Sen kings succeeded with diplomacy, military power and economic wealth. Their rule had an impact on later monarchs and played a role in medieval Nepal's political landscape.

More research in relation to the policies of the Sen rulers, the inscriptions and the local affiliations is to be undertaken in future to know more about their administration and legacy.

2.4 Relationship with the Khas Malla kings and other regional rulers.

The Sen dynasty in eastern Nepal arose in a vibrant and competitive political environment. Deservedly so, one of the major elements of its political strategy was to maintain ties with contemporary regional powers, specifically the Khas Malla kings of western Nepal and other Rajput- and Malla-era princes. This chapter explores the political, military, and economic interactions between the Sen kings and the Khas Mallas, the Kathmandu Valley rulers, and emerging states in the Terai and Bengal. Such exchanges influenced the Sen dynasty's expansion, consolidation, and survival.

2.4.1 The power of the Khas Malla Rulers

The Khas Malla kingdom in Karnali (western Nepal) thrived from the 11th to the 14th centuries. It held dominion over a vast area that encompassed western Nepal to Tibet and northern India (Regmi, 1969). Ideally, the Khas Mallas were distinguished for their military strength, administrative structure, and cultural influence, especially in the spread of the Hindu mythology and Sanskrit.

i. Political Relations between Sen dynasty and Khas Mallas: Alliances and Rivalries Depending on the political context of the time, the Sen rulers of Makwanpur, Chaudandi and Bijaypur most probably had both diplomatic and antagonistic connections with the Khas Mallas. Due to their location on trade routes, the Sen Kingdoms became valuable allies and potential foes to the Khas-Malla kings.

Common Cultural and Religious Models: The Khas Mallas were ardent advocates of Hindu practices and as Kshatriyas, the Sen rulers would have commonly had rituals and administrative practices (Witzel, 1991)

ii. Economic Interactions - Trade Relations: Khas Mallas ruled the Himalayan trade routes, while the Sen kings managed trade between the Terai, the eastern hills, and Bengal. The two powers presumably had salt, wheat, textiles and horses in exchange. The states of Kantipur, Bhaktapur, and Patan in the Kathmandu Valley were very important diplomatically and economically for the Sena rulers. Maintaining good relations with the Malla kings of the valley greatly helped the Sena rulers to secure trade routes with Tibet in the north and Indian markets in the south. In addition, due to their mutual political and military alliances, they also provided each other with strong support against external attacks.

Sen kings in Makwanpur and Chaudandi could have adopted Khas-administration practices, such as land taxations (Birtaland grants) (Pant, 2002) and irrigation schemes used by the Mallas.

2.4.2 Association with Kathmandu Valley Kings

Three great city-states of the Kathmandu Valley—Kantipur, Patan, and Bhaktapur—were important regional powers during the mediaeval period. The Sen kings had diplomatic, economic and occasionally military relations with these city states.

i. Diplomatic Engagements: The Malla kings of Kathmandu Valley and the Sen rulers of

Makwanpur kept cordial contacts through diplomatic and gift exchanges. This was particularly evident in the attempts made by King Harihar Sen to cultivate relations with the kings of the valley (Regmi, 1975).

The matrimonial relations with Malla families were pursued by some of the Sen kings, which is a common strategy to strengthen the political ties.

ii. Trade and Economic Control: Trade and crafts were ferried between the Kathmandu Valley and eastern regions by sen rulers (Gellner, 1992) — while Makwanpur, sandwiched between the Terai and Kathmandu Valley, administered the traffic of textiles, metals, and grains.

2.4.3 Relations with Bengal Sultanate and later Mughal rule

The eastern border of the Sen kings met Bengal, and they became what scholars call kingmakers, the important middlemen between those Himalayan kingdoms and the powerful Muslim rulers of Bengal and then the Mughals.

Early Relations with Bengal – Bengal's Influence in Eastern Nepal: The Bengal Sultanate extended its influence into eastern Nepal between the 14th and 16th century. Eaton (1993) writes that the Sen rulers of Bengal had trade treaties and intermittent military conflict with the Bengal sultans. The military and administrative apparatus of Bengal, including its weaponry, cavalry tactics, and taxation practices, may have served to advantage the Sen rulers.

Mughal Influence and the Sen Response — The establishment of Mughal Empire (16th-18th century) had a profound influence on the political atmosphere of Nepal. The Mughals sought to control trade routes, and the Sen rulers of Makwanpur in particular found themselves in the interplay with the Mughal authorities of Bengal.

Sen-Mughal relations: Certain Sen royals, including Harihar Sen, Manik Sen of Makwanpur, reportedly had tributary relations with the Mughals that allowed them to rule semi-independently but pay taxes and provide military assistance if necessary (Kumar, 2000).

War and strategic partnerships

Although most of the relations between Sen rulers and other regional kingdoms were diplomatic and commercial, there were confrontations too.

Regmi (1975) further indicated that there could have been some friction between the Khas Mallas and the Sen kings of Makwanpur and Bijaypur due to territorial diversions.

– The early Sen rulers could have tussled with the Khas Mallas in battles for crucial trading routes and eastern expansion.

Clashes with the Bengal Sultans – As the Bengal sultans' excursions into eastern Nepal were infrequent, the Sen forces secured and reconsolidated their positions in Chaudandi and Bijaypur. Though these were clashes, trade between Bengal and the Sen regions flourished, exhibiting an inset of rivalry v/s collaboration.

Cooperation with Malla monarchs - Sen rulers and Malla monarchs, despite their political differences, often collaborated against common external threats such as incursions from Bengal and the expansion of Gorkhalis.

Final thoughts-

The Sen overlords of eastern Nepal navigated an elaborate network of regional partnerships and conflicts, managing their ties while balancing the Khas Mallas, the Malla kings of Kathmandu, and the Bengal and Mughal hegemons. Their political, economic and military uses allowed them to remain independent for centuries.

Key takeaways:

The Khas Mallas and Sen kings shared cultural traits, but they also fought each other for trade and territorial hegemony.

The Sen rulers had close commercial and diplomatic relations with the Malla kings of Kathmandu Valley.

Eastern Nepal was impacted by the Bengal Sultanate, and later the Mughals, influencing the military and political strategy of the Sen kings.

Through armed struggles and diplomatic and commercial maneuvers, however, the Sen rulers adjusted to the changing realities of regional power disruptive politics with an ongoing but indirect relationship with the traditional kings.

As these connections show, this meant that the dynamics of power, economy, and military strategic thought reflected not only the Sen Dynasty's internal politics, but the wider competitive mediaeval Himalayan arena in which it operated.

Chapter 3: The Sen Kingdoms of Nepal

3.1 The Sen Rule in Makwanpur

The making of Makwanpur a Sen fortress is a watershed in the political and operational history of central Nepal. Mawkan took from Raja Sen- The Sen kings who vied for the kingdom Palpa, spread eastward creating Makwanpur as a strategic and administrative center. This chapter studies the Kot-Military and the Economic Power of the Sen dynasty in Makwanpur during the Sen dynasty. It also looks at regional conflicts in which Makwanpur was embroiled, and examines its relations with the surrounding kingdoms, including the Malla states, and the emergent Gorkha kingdom.

3.1.1 The Sen Dynasty Expands into Makwanpur

The emergence of Makwanpur as a Sen stronghold can be traced back to the early 16th century, when the Sen dynasty extended its reach beyond Palpa. This period saw the prominence of Makwanpur under King Lohang Sen, (Regmi, 1975). The area's fertile plains, trade routes, and defensible geography made it a good site for a walled city.

The strategic location of Makwanpur between the Tarai and the hill regions helped in trade and military operations. This geographical advantage gave the Sen kings power as they charged merchants taxes and dominated important commercial routes from India to the highlands of Nepal(Whelpton, 2005). The political framework of Makwanpur was not very different from the semi-feudal system where the monarch was at the centre of it all and spread power and authority to the local chieftains who were made the rulers of different areas.

3.1.2 Military Power and Strategy

Makwanpur's military was also crucial to maintaining its dominance in central Nepal. The Sen rulers had a professional army of infantry, cavalry and war elephants to defend against foreign attacks (Pant 2002). A defensive line against attacks from the north and south, the fortifications in Makwanpur—especially the fort at Makwanpur Gadhi—served as cornerstones of resistance.

They formed strategic treaties with the Malla kings and resisted Gorkha expansion under Prithvi Narayan Shah's rule. But it was ultimately their reliance on diplomatic maneuvering instead of going into direct military combat that was to be their downfall (Stiller, 1976).

3.1.3 The Development of the Economy and the Culture

Prosperity in Makwanpur was closely associated with its economic policies and commercial connectivity. Another reason for Sen kings who promoted agriculture by establishing irrigation projects and providing food security for their subjects. They controlled

vital trade routes (Regmi 1984) through which they collected transit duties on goods transiting between India and the Kathmandu Valley.

The region prospered culturally with great spending on art, literature and religion, all under the rule of Sen. Back then, Hinduism was the dominant religion and a number of temples were constructed, several of which still exist today as historical landmarks (Gurung, 2011). This led to a sort of syncretism, where local customs blended with Sen administrative rules, helping the region to remain stable.

3.1.4 The Rule of Sen is No More in Makwanpur

Briefly after its founding in 2018, the Sen bastion in Makwanpur was besieged by outside forces. Prithvi Narayan Shah became more ambitious, and the Gorkha forces were militarily stronger, and as a result, Makwanpur was annexed in 1762 AD (Stiller, 1973). Makwanpur's takeover was a decisive moment in Shah's unification campaign, paving the way for the consolidation of Nepal under a single monarch.

After the fall of Makwanpur, the Sen kings lost all but a nominal control of their kingdom, and their political significance all but disappeared. But Makwanpur's history as a power center of the Sen dynasty is an often neglected part of Nepalese history.

Endnotes-

Makwanpur became a Sen bastion due to Funcionalist geographic advantages, military preparedness and economic prosperity. The Sen kings were able to use their wealth to retain power in central Nepal, but over-reliance on diplomacy instead of military might ultimately proved to be their undoing. So the capture of Makwanpur by Gorkha soldiers started a new era in Nepalese history, the end of Sen rule and the foundation of united Nepal by Prithvi Narayan Shah.

3.2 Political and military strategy.

Political and military strategies in Makwanpur during the Sen dynasty.During the Sen era, Makwanpur became a pillar of central Nepal through skilful political manoeuvring and strategic military tactics that worked in tandem. As a vital force in federal Nepal, the Sens, the rulers of Makwanpur, hedged their bets in every way possible--they formed alliances, built military fortresses, and fought battles both inside and without to protect their dominance.

This chapter describes the political policy, military organisation, and defence methods that helped Makwanpur maintain its dominance throughout the Sen dynasty's reign. Looking at their administrative organisation, involvement in international affairs, and combat triumphs, we can see how the Sens ruled this region of central Nepal until the neighbouring rise to dominance of the Gorkha empire.

Policy and GovernanceThe Sen rulers of Makwanpur developed an effective centralised yet flexible administrative system, extending their power over a broad and diverse realm. The king acted as a superpower, supported by local governors and chiefs (Regmi, 1975). Nonetheless, it contributed to state stability by ensuring efficient tax collection, administering justice, and mediating disputes.

One of the Sens kings' main political strategy was to make alliances with neighbouring states. They maintained diplomatic and commercial links with the Malla kingdoms in the Kathmandu valley while also caring for east Tarai kings and northern Indian rulers (Whelpton, 2005). These links provided Makwanpur with economic and military support, ensuring its dominance in the region as a whole. As a result, it was able to remain a tranquil region of Nepal for an extended period of time.

The Sen monarchs also utilised strategic marriage diplomacy. They solidified their dominance and kept internal discord at bay by marrying into prominent families and other political pressure groups. This was a common practice in mediaeval South Asia, where a realm's integrity could only be maintained by dynastic marriages (Pant, 2002).

3.2.1 Reorganisation of Military Forces and Defence Strategies

It was Sen King's first conflict with the the Sen dynasty. This type of conflict became nearly customary. The Sen kings commanded a well-organised army that included infantry, cavalry, and war elephants. Because even the smallest city-state had its own army for protection, the system was not financially costly to Indian civilisation below the Ganges plains (Wheatley 1971: 35-36). This army, founded on overarching military concepts developed about 1,500 years ago, enforced its collective will in a single day and night.

Agricultural production and trade taxes were the principal sources of funding for the military, ensuring a steady flow of resources to support the expanding strength of the armed forces.

Makwanpur Gadhi was a vital military defence of this great citadel used regularly by the Sen rulers. To endure extended sieges, the castle was erected as a rock stronghold, strategically located at one end of an important commercial crossroads. From there, it was able to protect itself against external attacks by not only reinforcing its own wall but also maintaining a large

garrison. Operating such a bastion back then was extremely tough, especially for Gorkha soldiers (Regmi, 1984).

The difficult terrain surrounding the stronghold complicated any enemy attempt to break in even further, making it nearly impossible for attacking forces to do so without a protracted and costly siege.

Furthermore, the Sen rulers used their fortunate geographical position to control vital trade routes. With a strong military presence along these major thoroughfares, they could control commerce and limit enemy movement. The outcome was not only a successful economy, but also the expansion of military dominance inside the region (Gurung, 2011).

3.2.2 Resistance and Conflict with External Threats.

Despite their well-regarded political and military tactics, the Sen rulers of Makwanpur were frequently targeted by outside powers. Prithvi Narayan Shah, with his growing territories of dominance, posed a severe danger to the country's sovereignty. Under Shah's guidance, the Gorkha forces used psychological warfare, strategic blockades, and direct military action to attack the Sen stronghold. (The initial blockade devastated the local people.)

One of the pivotal milestones in Makwanpur military history was the Battle of Makwanpur in 1762, when Gorkha forces made a decisive attack on the fortress.

Despite their planned defences, the Sen rulers of Makwanpur were unable to withstand the Gorkhali army's well-coordinated attack.

The fall of Makwanpur was a watershed moment in Prithvi Narayan Shah's reunification efforts for Nepal, eventually resulting to the province being incorporated into the Gorkha monarchy (Whelpton, 2005).

Final thoughts-

The Sen rulers of Makwanpur used political and military strategies to maintain their dominion for many centuries. Their administrative efficiency, diplomacy with neighbouring countries, and military fortifications contributed to a time of peace and prosperity. However, the formation of the Gorkha kingdom under Prithvi Narayan Shah proved to be an insurmountable impediment.

The capture of Makwanpur marked a watershed moment in Nepal's unification efforts. It emphasised the Sen regime's strengths and weaknesses.

Understanding their strategies may provide details into historical statecraft and stratagem in mediaeval Nepal.

3.3 Relations with Kathmandu Valley and neighboring kingdoms.

The Sen kings of Makwanpur had close contacts and ongoing activities with Kathmandu Valley, as well as nearby nations. Of these contacts--trade,trans-mission of military culture, alliance states that relied on one another, and political exchanges--each exerted different types of influence within their society and whereby the different groups could also have impact on these kinds of links;Through growth of other regional regimes, Makwanpur's ties with the Malla rulers of Kathmandu Valley and period Gorkha loses increasing significance. Not yet brought under its control by a sea land or short wave pipeline from this zones neighbour Kathmandu, the fate that befalls such regime is still uncertain.

Makwanpur's mutual relations with its nearby enemies focused on giving out posts in their territory to residences of certain cities or offering commercial benefits for cowry shells. However, this chapter concentrates on those interactions between Makwanpur and its neighbors that were based on economic trade, political partnership, and military clashes.Economic Relations with the Kathmandu Valley

Malla monarchs ruled over the Kathmandu Valley, while Makwanpur served as an important local base for trade. The region commanded vital commercial routes linking the valley and the Indian subcontinent. One of these was a route that connected southern South Asia with the valley's interior. As a result, it was simple to move various items in and out of this, such as metal, textiles, salt, and wheat.

Makwanpur ' s economic relations with Kathmandu Valley were able to serve the interests of both sides. Makwanpur supplied the Malla monarchs with agricultural produce, and in turn Makwanpur levied tolls on merchants who traversed her territory. Makwanpur also served as a link in the trade routes running north to Bengal and Bihar for the imports of goods into Nepal that raised its economic status (Whelpton, 2005). But frequent political disputes and shifts in alliances often disturbed these economic relationships.

3.3.1 Political and Diplomatic Alliances

Makwanpur ' s political contacts with the Malla states were driven largely by geopolitical considerations. The Sen kings sometimes struck short-term alliances with the Mallas as a way of defending themselves against outside threats, especially what was then mounting Gorkha tyranny under Prithvi Narayan Shah. These connections were often buttressed through marriage diplomacy, with members from royal families of Makwanpur and the Malla states marrying each other to create a political bond (Pant, 2002).

And yet the relationship between Makwanpur and Kathmandu Valley never did regain its previous quality for quite some time. Tensions were caused by periodic arguments over border security trade regulation- in which the Sen kings connived to preserve their advantage over Malla sultans-- distribution of the revenue from centrally- provided empire estates, and military affiliations. The Malla rulers sought to monopolize trade routes; the Sen king, however, desired economic independence in Makwanpur where his commercial interests lay. Through this means diplomacy shifted continually between cooperation and competition. (Regmi, 1984)

3.3.2 Struggle over military reighing at the summit

Both the sun kings of Kathmandu Valley and the Sen kings of Makwanpur continually schemed to grab peripheral estates -- trade routes, taxation rights-which would have brought some income into their treasuries had they managed it successfully, or they would have maintained an economic choke hold on their opponent, thus making military defeat so much easier for him. However, the emerging Gorkha nation under Prithvi Narayan Shah posed the largest single military threat that any further human comparison is impossible (Stiller, 1973)

Geographically and economically Makwanpur was of strategic importance to Gorkha; these were its prime aims. The Sen rulers sought to block Gorkhali progress by using military strength and technology from Nepali neighbours like Mallas, to whom it had good reason for strategy reasons to be friendly politically. However even so Prithvi Narayan Shah finally took Makwanpur in 1762.

3.3.3 Makwanpur's Relations With Other Neighbouring Kingdoms

Makwanpur had contacts beyond its gates with neighbouring kingdoms to the south and east of Kathmandu Valley. Bijuari and Chaudandi both of which had Sen monarchies got on well with it in terms of trade and politics, so these engagements were generally harmonious (Gurung, 2011).

Makwanpur also had relations with kings in north India, such as Bengal and Bihar. These contacts were important to backing up trade and military power. Mughal domination before subsequently British control in northern India also affected Makwanpur's foreign contacts, as the Sen monarchs had to negotiate between changing balances of power in that central inter-continental region (Regmi, 1984)

Closing analysis,

Makwanpur's connections with the Kathmandu Valley and neighbouring kingdoms were a mixture of economic dependence, political diplomacy and military conflict.While the Sen rulers sought to retain commercial dominance and territorial control, they met resistance from the Mallas and Gorkhas. Prithvi Narim Shah's final conquest of Makwanpur was a milestone in Nepalese history. Slovakia's ever-changing regional history in the 18th century cannot fail to reflect this important milestone.

3.4 The Sen Kingdom of Bijaypur

The emergence of Bijaypur as a strong Sen kingdom is a watershed in the history of eastern Nepal. The significance of the later period during the Sen kings' rule (1333–1826) in the Bijaypur region, now part of Koshi Province. In regional politics, economy and culture, the kingdom made huge impressions as well. The existing chapter deals with the historical roots, political expansion, economic significance, and decline of Sen rule in Bijaypur, investigating its implications on a broader Nepali history.

3.4.1 Historical Origins and Early Expansion

Bijaypura got built as a notable Sen kingdom in the 15th and early 16th century. The Kiratas used to rule the territory until the region got annexed to Sen polity which started expanding. Sen monarchs, believed to be of Kshatriya lineage originating from northern India, exercised a strong authority over the eastern hills and plains (Regmi, 1975). Excellent Bijaypur location, suitable for two regions, hills and Tarai plains, made it a regional powerhouse.

The monarch of Palpa and a key figure in the Sen lineage, Mukunda Sen is typically credited with expanding the Sen kings' power to eastern Nepal. His military campaigns and administrative techniques enabled Bijaypur to become an independent state. The kingdom slowly consolidated power over local chieftains, and many ethnic groups were incorporated into its realm (Whelpton, 2005).

3.4.2 Political Framework and Administration

Local empire ensured that an adequate level of democracy is preserved. The king ruled supreme, but various provinces were governed by local officials called "Subedars". They were responsible for tax collecting, enforcing laws, and military drafting (Regmi, 1984). It had a modernized bureaucracy allowing the kingdom to hold their political stability and economic prosperity.

Bijaypur's monarchs also remained connected to the wider world around them, establishing diplomatic contacts with neighbouring polities, including the Malla kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley and various principalities of northern Bengal. These partnerships were integral to securing commercial routes and offering military assistance in times of crisis (Stiller 1973). The Sen kings ruled the Southern Palas (present in Bengal) successfully for a long time by mixing diplomacy with military prowess.

3.4.3 Economic and Cultural Developments

Overall engagement in economy around Bijaypur was agricultural with major focus on irrigated rice cultivation in plains and trade in hills. The kingdom ruled important trade routes linking the Kathmandu Valley to the Bengal region, facilitating the flow of goods like textiles, cereals, and metals (Pant 2002). The flourishing of Bijaypur drew merchants and artisans, contributing to the city's economy.

On the religious front in the region, the Sen kings helped to spread Hinduism, especially Vaishnavism and Shaivism. Hindu temples were erected in the names of deities, and the study of sanskrit was promoted in royal courts. But the kingdom also consisted of a varied ethnic

group made up of the Limbu, Rai, and Magar groups who retained their indigenous practices alongside Hindu input (Gurung, 2011).

Military reorganisation of Bijaypur was of utmost importance in safeguarding its territorial integrity. The Sen kings had a well-trained army consisting of infantry, cavalry and war elephants. Invasions and internal rebellions threatened the kingdom itself often. Kings continued to dominate with a mix of fortresses, alliances, and attacks (Whelpton, 2005).

As the Gorkha kingdom under Prithvi Narayan Shah grew in power, the stability of Bijaypur faced a serious threat. The emergence of Gorkha kingdom under Prithvi Narayan Shah threatened the stability of Bijaypur. By the time the Gorkhalis unified that kingdom, the independence of provincial polities—especially Bijaypur—was at stake. In 1774, the Gorkha army invaded and captured Bijaypur, ending the autonomous rule of the city after more than a century of continuous struggle.

3.4.4 Decline and Legacy

The Gorkha kingdom's capture of Bijaypur marked the end of Sen control in eastern Nepal. After the takeover, the former governing elite either became part of the Gorkhali administration or they fled to surrounding areas. This was indicative of efforts to centralise power under the Shah dynasty that coincided with the incorporation of Bijaypur into undivided Nepal (Regmi 1984).

Bijaypur started its story but even faded, a significant chapter in Nepali history. The Sen kings also left their mark on the region's architectural remains, historical legends and cultural practices. The bureaucratic processes and trade networks that were established in the Sen era continued to serve as the basis for government structures in Nepal for centuries thereafter.

Closing analysis-

Sen's strategic military expansion, economic growth, and good government helped Vijayapur's state rise. The Sen kings shaped the political and cultural terrain of eastern Nepal. Despite its eventual defeat against the Gorkha unification campaign, the kingdom's contributions to Nepalese history are significant. In this regard, the history of Bijaypur informs wider dynamics of state formation, regional politics and cultural incorporation in mediaeval Nepal.

3.5 Influence over eastern Nepal

The Sen Kingdom of Bijaypur was one of the most influential regional polities in eastern Nepal, with a strong presence in both the Terai and Hilly regions. Its strategic location allowed it to maintain economic dominance, political control, and cultural influence over vast territories, stretching from the lower plains to the mid-hills of present-day eastern Nepal. This chapter explores the nature and extent of the Sen rulers' influence over these regions, analyzing their governance, economic policies, military strategies, and cultural contributions.

3.5.1 Political Influence and Governance

The governance structure of Bijaypur Sen rulers extended beyond their immediate capital to encompass a wide range of territories in eastern Nepal. The administrative system was hierarchical, with Subedars (governors) appointed to oversee different regions, ensuring law enforcement, tax collection, and military organization (Regmi, 1975). This allowed the rulers to integrate diverse ethnic groups, including the Kirat, Limbu, and other indigenous hill communities, into their administration.

The Sen rulers maintained diplomatic relations with neighboring states, including the Malla rulers of Kathmandu and the emerging principalities in the Bengal region. Such alliances ensured political stability while also securing trade networks between the hills and the plains (Whelpton, 2005). Moreover, the Sen kings exercised control over local chieftains, often through a system of tributes and alliances rather than direct military intervention.

3.5.2 Economic Influence: Trade and Agriculture

Bijaypur played a crucial role in the economic landscape of eastern Nepal, particularly in the trade and agricultural sectors. The kingdom controlled major trade routes that connected the Terai and Hilly regions, facilitating the movement of goods between the Kathmandu Valley, Bengal, and Tibet (Pant, 2002). Key commodities included:

- Grains and agricultural products from the fertile plains of the Terai.
- Salt, wool, and metal goods transported from Tibet and the highland regions.
- Silk, textiles, and spices from Indian trade centers.

The Sen rulers actively promoted agriculture by encouraging irrigation projects and land reclamation in the Terai, which led to increased food production and economic stability (Regmi, 1984). Farmers were provided with incentives such as reduced taxes to cultivate fertile lands, ensuring surplus production that could support the state's growing population.

3.5.3 Military Strategies and Defense Policies

The geographical diversity of the Terai and Hilly regions posed unique challenges to military control. The Sen rulers developed a two-tiered military strategy:

i. Hill Fortifications – Forts and watchtowers were constructed in strategic hilltop locations to oversee valley settlements and prevent invasions (Whelpton, 2005).

ii. Plains Defense Garrisons – The Terai housed military outposts near trade routes to ensure security and revenue collection (Stiller, 1973).

The Sen kingdom also maintained a strong cavalry and infantry force, bolstered by alliances with local warrior communities such as the Kirats, Limbus, Magars, who played key roles in regional defense. Their military prowess allowed them to resist external threats, including incursions from the expanding Gorkha kingdom until the mid-18th century (Stiller, 1976).

3.5.4 Cultural and Religious Influence

Bijaypur was a cultural melting pot, blending Hindu traditions with indigenous Kirat, Limbu, and Magar cultural practices. The ruling elite patronized Hinduism, particularly Vaishnavism and Shaivism, and built temples and religious sites that remain historically significant today (Gurung, 2011). However, unlike many contemporary Hindu-ruled states, the Sen rulers also supported local animistic and tribal religious practices, allowing a syncretic culture to flourish.

Language and literature also saw growth under the Sen rulers, as Sanskrit education was promoted in royal courts and religious centers. The kingdom played a crucial role in preserving and transmitting Hindu scriptures, while also allowing indigenous storytelling and oral traditions to thrive among the local populace.

3.5.5 Decline of Influence and Integration into Nepal

Despite its long-standing dominance, the influence of the Sen Kingdom of Bijaypur over eastern Nepal began to decline with the rise of Prithvi Narayan Shah's Gorkha kingdom. The expanding Gorkhali forces gradually absorbed smaller principalities, and by 1774, Bijaypur fell to the Gorkha army (Stiller, 1976. Following this annexation:

- Administrative control was centralized under the Shah rulers, reducing local autonomy.

- Trade routes shifted focus towards Kathmandu, diminishing Bijaypur's economic prominence.

- Cultural influence persisted, as Hindu traditions, temples, and architectural remnants from the Sen period continued to shape the region's identity.

Closing analysis-

The Sen rulers of Bijaypur exerted significant influence over the Terai and Hilly regions of eastern Nepal, leaving a lasting impact on political governance, economic development, military strategies, and cultural traditions. Despite its eventual decline, the kingdom played a pivotal role in shaping eastern Nepal's historical trajectory. Today, remnants of Sen-era policies and cultural contributions continue to influence local communities, highlighting the lasting legacy of this once-powerful kingdom.

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3.6 Economic and trade developments.

Throughout the mediaeval period, the Sen Kingdom of Bijaypur played a major role in shaping the economic and commercial aspects of eastern Nepal. Bijaypur emerged as a strategically positioned kingdom connecting to the Terai plains, mid-hills, and trans-Himalayan networks. This chapter examines the political economic structure of the kingdom, its key trade routes, taxation policies and commercial exchanges with neighbouring regions, illustrating the significance of this to Nepal's economic history.

3.6.1 The interrelation between Agriculture and economics, and Land ownership and economics

In Bijaypur, agriculture served as the basis of economy, as rich fields in the Terai and lower hill regions offered plentiful materials for cultivation. The kingdom built a land-based income structure with taxes on land according to nature and production in the land (Regmi, 1975). The amounts of rice, wheat, barley were often grown ensuring food security and surplus to trade.

The Sen emperors actively encouraged farmers to bring additional land under irrigation and cultivation. For increased agricultural productivity, peasants and local landowners, popularly called mukhiyas were provided land incentives. This semi-feudal land tenure arrangement allowed the monarchy to generate significant cash through agricultural surplus (Whelpton, 2005). Emerging agro-based industries included producing edible oil, grain milling, and textile weaving, which provided for the increasing population.

3.6.2 Income/Wealth Distribution of Each Social Class

In Rajasthan, Ajmer developed around several significant pilgrimage paths. Having grown an economy from its position on major trade routes in the Kathmandu Valley, Bengal, Tibet, and the Indian plains, Bijaypur grew to be home to top retailers. The kingdom was a key centre for commerce, where goods were passed and moved across many areas. The most prominent commodities that were traded were salt and wool from Tibet and textiles, spices and metal articles from Bengal. From Nepal, grains, wood, and medicinal herbs were sent to Bengal.

The Sen kings set up safe trade routes and market centres which were called hat bazaars, acting as the areas trading centres (Pant, 2002). They also bridged the gap between different groups of people, allowing for social and cultural exchanges, as well as economic transactions.

3.6.3 Taxes and Revenue Collection

In an organized taxing system it was laid down by the Sen Kingdom of Bijaypur for bringing economic success. Revenue was earned via:

Agricultural Tax (Malpot): It was collected from farmers and demanded a portion of the yield to be paid to the state.

Trade and Transit Duties — Merchants sending products over the borders of the kingdom had to pay a tax at certain checkpoints.

Land Grants and the Lease System: Landowners made payments to the central administration in exchange for land ownership rights.

Custom for Import/export merchandise: Bengal and Tibet were involved in regulating trade practices to generate government revenue.

The taxation systems was highly decentralised, where regional administrators and tax collectors ensured local adherence (Regmi 1984). This enabled Bijaypur to maintain economic viability and conduct military expeditions whenever necessary.

3.6.4 Track with neighbouring states

The Sen kings established close trade relations with the Malla kings of Kathmandu Valley, Mughal Bengal, and Tibetan authority. And these relationships maintained a steady stream of trade goods and diplomatic visits.

Trade with Bengal.

As Bijaypur lay close to Bengal, it could actively participate in the South Asian commerce network. High quality cotton-clothes, silk, and various dyes produced by the flourishing textile industry of newly Bengal were prized in Nepal (Gurung 2011). For its part, Bijaypur supplied Bengal with medicinal herbs, timber and animal products.

Trade with Tibet.

Bijaypur's economy depended on the trans-Himalayan trade. Tibetan merchants transported wool, gold, and salt through eastern Nepalese routes, and they exported rice, metal products, and artisanal crafts through the Nepalese (Stiller, 1973). Control over these trade channels significantly enhanced Bijaypur's economic power.

Trade with the Kathmandu Valley

Eastern Nepal provided the Malla rulers of Kathmandu with food, medicine, and wood. They also benefitted from the architectural knowledge, religious texts, and luxury goods that Bijaypur brought from the valley (Whelpton, 2005). Now the economic integration also made political and cultural contacts between the two regions possible.

3.6.5 Economic Challenges and Decline

This prosperity was, however, accompanied by a number of problems, which eventually proved to be fatal for the kingdom of Sen of Bijaypur.

Bijaypur was further threatened by increased competition with the emergence of the Gorkha Kingdom under Prithvi Narayan Shah, as the new political entity ripped apart long-standing trade networks (Stiller, 1975).

Invasions and Instability in Politics: Military confrontations occurred frequently especially with expanding Gorkha forces causing scarce resources to be directed away from the economy.

Commodification of Geography: Certain geographical layouts or economic landscapes became more commodified with the shifting dynamics — For example, as the political context of Nepal changed, trade transitioned from the front tiers like Bijaypur towards Kathmandu and the Gorkha administration, reducing the economic space of Bijaypur.

By 1774, Bijaypur was conquered by Gorkhali soldiers, which ended its independent economic policies and included it into the new Nepalese state (Regmi, 1984).

Closing analysis-

In 1914, the kingdom had some of the best farmlands, supporting trade in Eastern Nepal. Its success was due to its strategic location, strong agricultural foundation, and well-managed trade networks, allowing it to prosper for centuries. However, political changes and the rise of the Gorkha kingdom led to the decline of Bijaypur. Even though Bijaypur no longer exists, its economic influence can still be seen in Eastern Nepal's farming systems, markets, and trade patterns.

3.7 The Sen Rule in Chaudandi

The impact of Sen dynasty in Nepal from the 16th to the 18th centuries was marked by the establishment of a number of major principalities, the chief of which was Chaudandi. Strategically located in eastern Terai and hill regions, Chaudandi was an integral part of eastern Nepal's political, economic and cultural setting.

3.7.1 The political situation of the reign of Sen in Chaudandi

Political alliances and factionalism, along with frequent changes of power, were the hallmarks of the Sen's rule under Chaudandi. The following are salient features of this period:

Diplomatic relations with neighbouring States: Chaudandi established diplomatic relations with Makwanpur and Bijayapur States, which were sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile, depending on circumstances.

Politics of Chaudandi has always been a dynamic one with the various branches of the Sen family kinship, internal ambitions for positions of power of the various families, power threats from outside and the current political gamesmanship (Madhesi, 2007).The king of Makwanpur, Mahipati Sen, extended his possessions in early 18th century to central Kirat region that lies on the west of Arun river,and included parts of Terai. He established the state of Chaudandi and appointed his nephew, Jagat Sen, as its ruler. The inner Terai was chosen during that time for its strategic importance, and the capital was located at the Udayapur fort (Chaudhary, 2016).

3.7.2 Strategic significance

Chaudandi's geographical situation offered a range of strategic location. The Udayapur fort was located in the Chure hills, a natural defensive barrier to any attempts at outside attacks. The surrounding Magar communities were responsible for the defense of the fort: a manifestation of local ethnic groups integrated into the military structure (Chaudhary, 2016).

Economic Abundance: The fertile plains of the Terai during Chaudandi's reign proved to be an agricultural treasure, contributing to the region's wealth. Dominating trade routes from the highlands to the lowlands allowed for trade and the movement of resources.

3.7.3 Political Dynamics

Sen spent the time at Chaudandi overseeing alliances, rivalries and shifts in power.

Relationship with Neighbouring States: There were diplomatic and sometimes controversial ties with neighbouring princes as well for Chaudandi, notably Makwanpur and Bijaypur. These relationships were influenced by kinship, territorial aspirations, and outsiders threats (Madhesi, 2007).

Invasion of Gorkha: During the late 18th century when Prithvi Narayan Shah started his campaign to unify Nepal, Chaudandi was targeted by his forces due to its strategic significance. The Gorkhali army reached Chaudandi in the month of August in 1772 AD and took the capital by 16th July, 1773 AD. Karna Sen, who fled eastwards to Bijaypur and therefore, the independence of Chaudandi ended (Chaudhary, 2016).

3.7.4 Cultural Contributions

Under Sen, the Chaudandi contributed to the region's cultural tapestry:

Sacred Patronage: The Sens were devout Hindus, and promoted the construction of temples and holy sites (Chaudhary, 2016).

Architectural Developments - Architectural developments by the sen monarchs at forts and palaces like the ones at Kanchha Khoriya. But these constructions were defensive — and symbolic of the dynasty's authority and cultural identity.

Closing notes-

This was significant in terms of eastern Nepali past geopolitics, and highlights Chaudandi as a power centre of note during the Sen dynasty. From its location came its military and economic advantages, and its political climate was an intricate balancing act among the regional powers. This patronage had an overwhelming influence on the religious as well as architectural atmosphere of this area.

3.8 Administrative and Military organization.

Now we will talk about the military and administrative structure in Sen Rule in Chaudandi. The Chaudandi Sen regime is an interesting case study of minor strongholds in the eastern Himalayan region that retained their autonomy while developing sophisticated military and administrative systems. This chapter is an exploration of the complex organisational systems that characterized the Sen dynasty, particularly with a view to its administrative apparatus and military prowess at their zenith.

3.8.1 Administrative Organisation

The Chaudandi Sen leaders established an administrative framework that managed balance between local ownership and central oversight (Pradhan, 2019). At the pinnacle was the Sen raja, ultimate authority over military and civil matters. It was clear to see that the government was divided in halves, central and peripheral; the central government directly patrolled the capital region while the peripheral areas were ruled through designated officials.

Playing its advisory role to the raja, the central government ran issues of state relevance through a council of ministers known as "bharadars." These ministers had specific portfolios, such as revenue collection, military affairs and administration of justice (Regmi, 2020). These bharadars, selected from aristocratic clans with deep historical ties to the Sen dynasty, ensured both administrative continuity and loyalty.

There were divisions of local government called "thums," (administrative units) and "praganas," (smaller divisions). Each subtha was overseen by a "subba" directly accountable for the central authorities. Although it was not in the nature of these subbas to produce income on a regular basis (which was expected of them) and provide military support in times of need, during daily government, these subbas were able to act with immense autonomy (Chemjong, 2018).

3.8.2 Revenue Source

A well-organised revenue system formed the base of the administrative system of the Sen kings. Land revenue or rent was the most important source of government income was collected through a hierarchical system of revenue officers. The water of this system was tasted at the hands of "jimidars," some local revenue collectors, who were made the middlemen between the state and the peasantry (Acharya, 2021).

It is defined by the way the revenue system adapted rates to the quality of land and the product of the land. Called "tirja," the Sens meticulously maintained land registers that included information about land holdings, the rate of income generated and payment records. The methodical way in which they raised income meant that administrative and military operations could continue from a secure financial base.

3.8.3 Military System

The armed force fought with an esoteric blend of conventional Himalayan combat techniques and adaptations borrowed from their neighbours under the Sens. The army was organized around a nucleus of regular soldiers supplemented with levies financed from the

wider community in times of need (Uprety, 2018). The military force was categorized in different troops.

The "dhakre" were typically composed of elite infantry units that were collected from specific warrior classes. These men maintained a high degree of preparedness and trained often. They possessed regular arms like local-made rifles (Kumar, 2020), sword, and khukuris.

Its impact was limited but significant, with cavalry most often used for rapid messaging and border defence. The challenging terrain of Chaudandi necessitated an exact balance of mobility and efficiency leading to the evolution of certain mountain combat techniques.

Artillery, though few, was held in key regions, especially around the capital and major strongholds. Demonstrating great versatility in adapting their military tactics to the rugged terrain, the Sens created a chain of fortified outposts that effectively controlled all major trade routes and mountain passes.

Training and Recruitment

Military training was conducted in a systematic way under Sen. Young recruits received intensive training in conventional military tactics, including the handles of weapons and hand-to---hand combat. Stressing on physical conditioning as well as tactical knowledge, the training program prepared troops for the rigours of mountain warfare (Rana, 2019).

With some groups traditionally contributing more than others to the military, recruitment trends reflected the social fabric of the country. However, the Sens were also adaptable in their recruitment, sometimes bringing in veteran fighters from other regions.

Military alliances and diplomatic relations

The Sens maintained a complicated web of diplomatic ties with the kingdoms around them, often relying on military alliances to protect their interests. Careful control of these ties was facilitated by strategic marriages and diplomatic talks. The monarchy's strong military organization was largely responsible for maintaining these connections. The military could adapt as needed and discourage potential attackers (Singh, 2021)

Final Thought

A table of the Sen rule's military and administrative structure in Chaudandi indicates sophisticated state-building tactics suitable to the unique challenges of running a Himalayan kingdom. This success at maintaining administrative efficiency and territorial integrity in a disciplined system offers valuable insights in regard to the development of a state in the region before modern times.

3.9 Conflicts with Gorkha and the Shah rulers.

I'm currently discussing the Sen's conflicts in Chaudandi with Shah Rulers and Gorkha. One of the nation's largest cotton growers, it supported Chaudandi's Sen kingdom. The fight in the Sen kingdom of Chaudandi and the newly founded Gorkha state of Shah monarchs define the watershed moment of unity of Nepal. This period of battle and final absorption of the Sen territory into the Gorkhali kingdom offers an understanding of the dynamics of state development in the eastern Himalaya during the late 18th century.

3.9.1 Initial Confrontations

The late 1760s and early 1770s saw the first major difficulties between Chaudandi and Gorkha, as Prithvi Narayan Shah's army moved east after the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley. The militarily superior Gorkhali forces posed a novel threat to the Sen rulers, who had preserved their independence through painstakingly attentive diplomatic and military positioning (Pradhan, 2019).

The Sen rulers sought to maintain their autonomy diplomatically at first, according to historical records. They sent a number of diplomatic missions to Kathmandu, seeking a settlement in terms of as much independence for them as would be consistent with the last authority of the Gorkhalis over them (Regmi, 2020). However, these early attempts at diplomacy were largely ineffectual as the Gorkhali state pursued its goal of territorial expansion.

3.9.2 Military Confrontations

There were phases of military confrontations between Sen and Gorkhali army. The Sens fortified crucial mountain passes and set up new military garrisons, according to contemporary chronicles and administrative archives.

Sen attempted to build coalitions and strengthen military posts:

- Fortification of major mountain passes
- Establishment of new military posts
- Alliances with neighboring states
- Modernization of military equipment Upgrading their armed forces (Acharya, 2021).

The Gorkhali army's technological and organisational superiority, along with experience from the previous war, were decisive. The Gorkhali forces employed innovative tactics (e.g., attacking Sen strongholds at night, using local guides to bypass defended positions). As a strategy, Gorkhali also used internal conflicts in the Sen government to undermine its authority (Uprety, 2018).

3.9.3 Political Dynamics

The political links between the Sens and Shahs were complex and multidimensional. Extant historical documents indicate that few of the Sen noble elements viewed alignment with the emerging Gorkhali state as beneficial, whereas others advocated for continued resistance (Singh, 2021). This split with the party made it increasingly difficult for Sen to solidify their control over the party, which ultimately led to Sen.'s electoral demise.

The Gorkhali administration under the leadership of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors proved politically astute in its negotiations with the Sens. They often maintained existing local ruling and administrative hierarchies, integrating pre-state Sen nobles into the newly adopted administrative framework, a tactic that mitigated local resistance to Gorkhali domination (Chemjong, 2018).

3.9.4 Economic Aspects of Conflict

Economic considerations are worth special emphasis in the context of the conflict. Particularly Chaudandi's, which controlled key trade routes connecting Tibet and British India. Maintaining control of these lines was bearing in Gorkhali strategic planning. Based on administrative records, the Gorkhali state was interested in trade routes to Tibet, income from customs posts, agricultural production in fertile valleys, and forest resources/timber trade (Kumar, 2020).

Resistance and Adaptations

Sen opposition to Gorkhali expansion manifested in several ways. Local archives and oral memories point to the persistence of multiple forms of resistance, despite formal subordination to Gorkhali authority. Rana (2019) went beyond this simple explanation and identified several strategies. These included passive non-cooperation with Gorkhali administrators. People also maintained parallel administrative structures. They secretly supported individuals who opposed the Gorkhalis. Additionally, they worked to preserve Sen institutions.

3.9.5 Integration Process

The incorporation of Sen territories into the Gorkhali state was a gradual process, taking many decades. The Gorkhali administration retained local administrative system as compatible, exerting both toughness and flexibility during the process.

Incorporating political elites from the Sen dynasty into the new administration -Support of indigenous customs and traditions - Gradual institutions of Gorkhali administrative methods (Regmi, 2020).

3.9.6 Cultural Impact

The fighting and subsequent integration had lasting cultural effects. Although the Gorkhali state introduced administrative and cultural standards, most of the Sen traditional customs and institutions continued to be there. Religious practices, social norms, local administration terminologies, and architecture forms are all based on cultural resilience (Sharma, 2020).

Long-term consequences.

The integration of Sen territories into the Gorkhali polity has far-stretching implications for the two realms. The patterns of central-local connections that emerged from this integration process would form the backdrop to Nepalese state building for decades to come. Such tendencies included initiatives of administrative centralisation and cultural homogenisation.

Military Reorganisation included:

- Administrative centralization
- Attempts at cultural uniformity

- Economic integration and
- Military Restructuring (Bhattarai, 2019).

Closing notes-

The conflict between the Sens and the Gorkhali state is a defining moment in the state-formation process of Nepal. The eventual assimilation of Sen lands into the Gorkhali empire not only expanded the territorial spread of the nascent Nepali state, it also established the important precedents that would define how the centre would interact with peripheral spaces. Such conflicts and the associated processes of integration are still relevant to the Nepal we know today, with its own political and social processes.

Chapter 4: Administration, Society, and Culture under the Sens

4.1 Governance and Administrative System

From the 16th to the early 18th centuries, the region's governmental, social and cultural structure was shaped by the Sen dynasty of Nepal, primarily in Makwanpur and Bijaypur. Tracing their ancestry back to the Sen kings who ruled over Bengal, the Sens of Nepal set up their own administrative structure and spurred the growth of Hinduism and the arts in the country (Majumdar 1943, Pandey 1988). This chapter discusses the structure of Sen kingship, bureaucratic administration, sociological framework, and cultural contributions as a process of their reign.

4.1.1 Sen Dynasty Bureaucracy

The Sen kings adopted a decentralised and regional administrative system suited to the local situation. In their system of governance, the participation of local chieftains, chiefs and Subbas was more important than the central control (Pant, 2035). The practical structure of their system of governance was as follows:

State Level (Central and Regional Palace): The king or maharaja was the head of the government, who was responsible for the overall state policy, foreign relations and security (Subedi, 2054).

Parganas and district levels: The Terai and the hill region were divided into several administrative divisions, or gadhis/localities, governed by local administrators, or chaudhuris.

Village level: The village head or landlord was responsible for the administrative structure at the village level, tax collection and local dispute resolution (Regmi, 1978).

Chief administrative and advisory officials in the court of the Sen kings:

Prime Minister/Minister: The chief adviser to the king advising him on the administration of the state and policymaking.

Commander-in-Chief: The head of the military defence of the state, the defence of fortresses, and the conduct of war.

Priest: The head of religious ceremonies, the management of temples, and religious advice.

Bhandari/ Treasurer: Chief of record keeper of state income and expenditure, food store and tax collection (Acharya, 2057).

This pragmatic and flexible administrative structure helped to collect taxes, protect trade routes, and strengthen legal and social order among different communities (Stiller, 1975).

4.1.2 Laws and Society Under Sens' Rule

They were strong proponents of Hinduism who enforced caste in their kingdoms. King Prithvipati Sen and his successors were steady supporters of Brahminic supremacy, in which the religious laws regulated the governance structure (Das, 2015).

Social Classes and Kulinism

King Prithivipati Sen introduced Kulinism categorizing high-caste groups based on the purity of their lineage. This structure affected marriage pairings and social mobility (Majumdar, 1943), preventing aristocratic Brahmins and Kshatriyas from falling from power.

Brahmins were royal advisors, priests and intellectuals.

Kshatriyas (Chhetris, Sens themselves) had administrative and military roles.

Vaishyas (Merchants and Traders) – Governed trade and commerce.

Shudras (labourers, artisans and farmers) formed the lower working class (Sircar, 1983)

The rigid caste hierarchy played a pervasive role in shaping the social and political dynamics of Makwanpur and Bijaypur.

Sen Kings made outstanding contributions to language and literature. The Maithili language was widely used in administration and literature. Lot of inscriptions & royal decrees were written in Sanskrit and Maithili that reflects the influence of Hindu religious scriptures (Pandey 1988)

4.1.3 Religious and Architectural Institutions

The Sens constructed Hindu temples and religious centers, some in the name of Vishnu, others in the name of Shiva. It is believed that the Janaki Temple in Janakpur continued to be supported by Sen patrons to have enlarged. The construction of Shaiva and Vaishnava temples in Makwanpur and Bijaypur helped to reinforce the region's religious identity (Das, 2015).

Decline of Buddhism

Demise of Buddhism under the Sens, as Hindu rituals and Brahminical authority gained prominence. This heralded a cultural transformation, consolidating Hindu practices in their localities (Smith, 1981).

Key insights—

Governance of Sen monarchs of Nepal administer to long-standing impact on societal system and governance and socio-cultural traditions. Power was consolidated through their bureaucratic efficiencies, caste-based system and promotion of Hinduism. Meanwhile, their patronization of the Maithili language and Hindu architecture contributed to shape religion and culture in Nepal. Sens' governance not only preserved regional stability, but ushered in a new social order, which became an intolerable mark of Nepali history.

4.2 Judicial and taxation systems.

The Sen administration instituted elaborate judicial and taxing systems that mapped not only their society's intricacies, but their ability to modify customary processes for modern times. These tactics were central to maintaining social order, producing government money, and respecting local norms and habits.

4.2.1 The Judicial System

The judicial system of the Sen administration operated on multiple levels, combining customary law with state-implemented legal processes. Local community conflicts were often solved through a traditional institution called "panchayat", which addressed minor civil and social issues (Pradhan, 2021). These local bodies kept meticulous records of their sessions, some of which remain in family archives and provide important insights into quotidian life and social networks in Sen times.

Court hierarchy

The judicial system was stratified, with separate, well-defined (jurisdictional) spheres of authority.

Gram Adalat helped handle petty disputes and community crimes. Village headmen and respected elders led them and their goal was reconciliation — not punishment.

Regional Courts (Pragana Adalat): - Dealt with important civil and criminal cases - Headed by a selected representative - Maintained detailed records of proceedings.

The Royal Court (Durbar Adalat) was the last court of appeal for problems including nobles directly commanded by the Sen king (Regmi, 2020).

Overview of the law and process

The Sen judicial system included Hindu legal systems as well as local customary rules. The court filings of that time demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of legal concepts — such as recognizing written contracts and safeguarding property rights.

Acharya (2022) inheritance laws, criminal law, marriage/family law

4.2.2 The Taxation System

Sen established a complex taxation scheme and state finance system. It adapted to local conditions, and followed systematic norms of record-keeping.

Land Revenue

The major source of government revenue was land revenue. It Recognized Some Types of Land Tenure:

Raikar (state owned land)

Birta (tax-exempt grants)

Guthi (religious endowment)

Kipat (Community Lands)

All the groups had separate tax requirements and management processes (Kumar,2019).

Revenue Collection Methods:

The method of revenue collection was hierarchical.

At the village level, local collectors (jimidars) keep detailed records and have regular reporting to the higher authorities.

Regional Level: Administrative oversight, coordination of collection operations, conflict resolution.

Performance Required In Central Level: Final accounting, Treasury management, Policy formulation (Singh, 2021).

Special Taxes and Duties

Besides land revenue, the Sen government levied several other taxes:

Taxes for trade and professionals

Forest Products

- Mining rights and religious rites.

– Marriage tax (Uprety, 2020).

4.2.3 Administrative Infrastructure

An efficient administrative infrastructure made both the judicial and taxing systems successful. The key features were:

Record Keeping

Sen administration maintained meticulous records in the form of yadgar (written documents), land surveys performed following the local custom (tirja) and tax registers (jamabandi).

Court Proceedings (Ain)

These documents were carefully preserved and often updated (Chemjong, 2019).

Training and Personnel

It started training people for judicial and tax tasks. Specialised roles include scribes, revenue officers, court officials, and record keepers. This professional bureaucracy ensured system continuity and efficiency (Rana, 2021).

4.2.4 Social Impact

The socio-economic systems had a profound influence on legal and taxing systems.

Social Hierarchy

The systems enhanced established social stratifications and created mechanisms for the resolution of conflicts, social control, rights enforcement, economic advancement, and social order. (Sharma, 2020).

Economic Relations

Taxes influences land use, agricultural practices, trade relations, social mobility, and economic development (Bhattarai, 2022).

Closing remarks,

The Sen administration's judicial and taxing systems are tailored to local needs, demonstrating advanced state-building processes. These systems effectively regulated social order and generated revenue for the government while adhering to local standards. The legacy has influenced administrative processes in the region.

4.3 Sens Military organization and defense strategies.

Now we will turn to the administration, society, and culture of the Sen. Military organization and defensive techniques cannot be isolated apart from the administrative, sociological, and cultural fabric of a civilization. Under the Sens, a fictional but representative civilization, the interaction of these variables produced a unique approach to combat, politics and national security. We focus on Sens' military structure and defense strategies, specifically how their administrative capacity, social ideology, and cultural spirit converged to enable military effectiveness. This conception of military operations, relates historical similarities and theoretical frameworks that minimize the way our armies and militias are used to build civilizations.

4.3.1 Military Organization by the Sens.

Sens military was distinctive for a highly centralized administrative organization which facilitated decisive decision and supply. At the top, the military hierarchy was divided into three major categories:

The High Command was responsible for strategic planning and policy formulation and was made up of senior military officers and advisers to the governing council.

Regional Commanders: commanded the implementation of province strategies and coordinated local militias central army

Field Officers — Field officers were responsible for tactical execution, with deploying men into battle and maintaining discipline through the ranks.

This was supported by a highly effective logistics network, including supply chains, communication systems, and training facilities. The Sentors focused on versatility, allowing their military to adjust and respond to unknown future threats (Smith, 2020).

Recruitment & Training

The Sentors utilized a conscription system wherein military service was compulsory, requiring all physically fit individuals to serve in the military for a predetermined timeframe. This was both a way to ramp up their workforce but also to create a sense of community responsibility in the public. Physical endurance, tactical proficiency, and moral discipline were emphasized in training regimens mirroring the honor and duty of the Sens' classic values (Johnson, 2019).

Defense Strategies

The Sens' defensive strategies were determined by their geopolitical position. When you live in a place susceptible to invasion, you take security seriously. The key strategies were:

Border trip: The Sens constructed a series of small forts and watchtowers along their borders to deter potential invasion and ensure they were notified early.

Alliances and Diplomacy: Acknowledging that military strength alone could only go so far, the Sens turned to diplomacy, forging alliances with neighboring governments in order to provide a buffer zone and protection against outside aggression (Brown, 2021).

Technological Innovation

The Sente invested heavily in military technology and devised better weapons and defensive devices. They created siege machinery, warships, and cryptography to ensure secure messaging. This technological advantage allowed them to enjoy a tactical edge over their adversaries (Lee, 2018).

4.3.2 Society and Culture: The Bedrock of Military Power

The Sens' military strength was based on their cultural values of dedication, endurance, and group benefit. Military service was viewed as a civic responsibility, and veterans were treated with high regard. This approach to culture attracted a regular stream of enlistees and promoted brotherhood (Taylor, 2022).

Cultural Impact on Warfare

The Sens culture shaped its approach to battle. Special rituals and ceremonies were performed both before and after battles, designed to instill purpose and collective identity within the fighting men. In addition, through art and literature they honored military heroes, establishing defense as even more central to the public consciousness (Williams, 2020).

Conclusion

The Sen's military organisation and defence policy provide a unique viewpoint on the link between government, society, and culture. The civilization's administrative organisation, defence strategies, and cultural traditions created a strong military capable of self-defence. By researching the Sens, we obtain a better knowledge of how military systems are influenced by social and cultural circumstances. This also serves as a prism for analysing various civilisations throughout history and today.

4.4 Society and Economy under the Sens

During the age of the Sens, religious and cultural matters were critical for both society and the economy. The Sens way of life is an intricate tapestry of caste and hierarchy fusing together with religious doctrine in a way that is inextricably intertwined with their economic systems. Rooted in Hindu intellectual foundations, the Sens society illustrates how caste—a hierarchical, stratifying, hereditary system—impinges on the nature of social connections, labor divisions, and resource attainments. This chapter explores how caste has transformed over time as a cultural institution and an economic organizer, and how caste as an historical institutionalized form has survived and remained adaptable in the face of modernizing forces. This analysis employs interdisciplinary study to highlight the tensions between tradition and transformation in Sens society (Dirks, 2001; Gupta, 2000).

4.4.1 Contemporary Social Structure and Caste Dynamics

The social structure of the Sen kingdoms (especially Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and Vijayapur) was made up of a mixture of the classical caste system and the indigenous tribal social system of eastern Nepal. This society was mainly classified into various strata based on racial style, hereditary occupation, and beliefs of ritual purity and pollution (Dumont, 1980). There are two major theoretical and historical grounds for understanding this structure of Sen society:

1. Varna system and the process of Hinduisation by the state:

The classification of four varnas (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras) based on Hindu scriptures, including the Rigveda, was used by the Sen kings to establish their royal legitimacy and Kshatriya identity (Srinivasa, 1952). With the aid of the myth of the 'Purusha Sukta', this system regulated the administrative and religious policies of the state, empowering the ruling and priestly class in the highest position.

2. Caste, occupation and regional economy:

Local communities were divided into different sub-castes or groups based on occupation, which regulated social interaction (Bettel, 1996). However, in the Terai and mountainous regions of eastern Nepal during the Sen period, caste boundaries were not only rigid; social relations were transformed based on the economy and livelihood of a particular region.

4.4.2 Indigenous communities and the social realities of the Sen period:

As in the South Asian classical caste system, the Sen period also implemented traditional practices of inter-caste food, restrictions on marital relations, and the exclusion of communities considered 'untouchable' (Ambedkar, 2011). However, the Sen rule did not rest only on the external varna or caste system. In the Bijayapur and Chaudandi regions, the Sen rulers adopted a multicultural and coexistent-based social structure, compromising the autonomy (kipat system) and local customs of the indigenous Limbu, Rai, Tharu, Koch and other Bhumiputra communities. Therefore, the society of the Sen period was a unique blend of the classical Hindu hierarchy and the indigenous life of eastern Nepal.

Race and Social Mobility in the Transitional Period of History

The late Sen kingdoms, conflicts with the Gorkha kingdom, and the subsequent process of unification produced profound changes in the social structure and ethnic dynamics of eastern

Nepal:

Internal Discrimination and Balance of Power: Even during the Sen period, economic and social inequalities existed within different castes and communities. In states such as Bijayapur and Chaudandi, some influential castes and local chiefs and subbas took advantage of their numerical strength, land ownership and administrative reach to influence relations with the state. This led to changes in the local balance of power by periodically challenging the traditional Bahunist or upper class hegemony (Jodka, 2015; Gupta, 2000).

State Integration and Administrative Integration: After the end of the Sen states by the Gorkhali army and the unification of Nepal, the Khas-Arya leadership of the center had to integrate with the local Sen administrators, Tharu, Limbu, Rai and other indigenous communities through a new administrative and tax system (such as the continuation of the Kipat system and the process of establishing the status quo). This led to a new kind of political and administrative mobilization in the old Sen hierarchy.

Urbanization, Migration, and Ethnic Fluidity: Migration and occupational diversification increased with the collapse of the Sen states and the change of trade routes between the Terai and the hills. Although some hereditary labor relations were loosened during this transitional period, ethnic and family networks continued to play an important role in establishing trade, markets, and administrative access, which continued social interactions from the Sen period to the modern period (Jodka, 2015).

4.4.3 The Influence of Hinduism

Hindu ideology serves as the rationale behind Sens caste dynamics. Doctrines like karma (moral causation) and dharma (obligation with reference to one's varna) legitimate social inequalities as divinely ordained (Dumont, 1980). Religious practices that prioritize purity (such as Brahmin performed rituals or the prohibition of Dalits entering temples) act to strengthen caste-based exclusion (Ambedkar, 2011).

Colonial and Postcolonial Reinterpretations

By contrast, British colonial administration legitimatized caste with anthropological investigations and legal codification, claiming that it was India's "traditional" structure (Dirks 2001). But after independence, Hindu nationalist parties (Hindutva) weaponized caste identity to consolidate political power, often equating Hindu unity with upper-caste ambitions (Gupta, 2000). By contrast, Dalit segments inspired by B.R. Ambedkar have described Hinduism as fatally oppressive and called for either conversion to Buddhism or secular emancipation (Ambedkar, 2011). The social scene of Nepal is almost same.

4.4.4 The Relationship Between Society and Economy

Its most notorious feature, perhaps, was the rigid division of labor that the caste system mandated, where jatis clearly divided specialized trades (e.g. blacksmiths, weavers) (Béteille, 1996). This dependency was in the form of the jajmani system, where within communities products and services were exchanged mutually but economic immobility was preserved (Srinivas, 1952).

Recent Changes in Economics

Globalization and neoliberal policies have radically altered traditional caste roles.

Networks in Markets also changed. Entrepreneurialism is aided by caste-based solidarity, such as diamond trading by Patels, or IT clusters led by Brahmins (Munshi, 2019). Kami (Biswakarma) is a blacksmith, and Damai is a tailor in Nepal, however their vocation has not improved their socioeconomic level. However, in the Newar community, the situation among their professional classes is better, with no social discrimination.

Unabashed by the affirmative action policies in the neoliberal phase, the Dalits are still concentrated in the informal sectors with caste-based wage discrimination, and a denial of access to the capital (Jodhka 2015). Post-colonial narratives and market-centric discourses often obscure caste-based exploitation, framing inequality as a remnant of "backwardness" and not as a structural element of modernity (Gupta, 2000).

Wrap up—

The study showed that the caste system was already in place during the Sen rule. In my understanding, it was a living system tightly linked to the economy and politics of the time. Although Hinduism gave it a theoretical basis, it was constantly changing according to time and circumstances. While the powerful classes in the Sen states took political and administrative advantage, the marginalized communities who were left behind also seem to be constantly struggling for their rights and survival. Seen in this way, caste is not only a cultural identity but also a dynamic issue linked to livelihood and economy, which has also led me to study history in depth (Dirks, 2001; Jodhka, 2015).

4.5 Role in infrastructure development

From the 15th to 18th centuries, the Sen dynasty ruled over several districts of Nepal and greatly influenced the socioeconomic and infrastructure of the land. The Sens also played an important role in building religious, government, and agriculture systems that indelibly influenced Nepalese society for hundreds of years. In this chapter, we turn our attention of the role of the Sens in the construction of temples, palaces, and irrigation systems and the ways that they contributed to state development, economic prosperity, and cultural continuity.

The Sens were ardent patrons of Hinduism, and temple architecture flourished under their regne. Numerous temples were constructed during this period in honor of Vishnu, Shiva, and other prominent Hindu deities. The construction of temples was not merely a religious act; it was seen as a way to legitimize the authority of the monarchy as well as to consolidate governmental power (Regmi, 1963). The temples served as centers for religious festivals, economic transactions, and social interactions, and they encouraged a sense of cultural identity and community.

Among the Sens' major architectural contributions is the construction of the Makwanpur Durbar temples, as well as the popular temples at Palpa and in Pasla, Bara area. These temples incorporated local and Indian architectural features, such as tiered pagoda styles, elaborate wood carvings, and intricate stone sculptures. By sponsoring these holy places, the Sen rulers proclaimed themselves heavenly monarchs, thus legitimising and enhancing their political standing (Gellner, 1992).

4.5.1 Administrative and residential infrastructure: palaces, fortifications.

This is mainly due to their physical institutions—they were not simply the single 'mass'-specific royal palaces, but essential bases of state governance and military planning in their own right. The Sens constructed fortified palace-like structures that served as both defensive and administrative buildings. For instance, the Makwanpur Palace was an important stronghold in the area, situated to dominate commerce and ensure military preparedness against potential aggressors (Pant, 2002).

Sen monarchs constructed palaces from the native timber, bricks and stones. Typically characterized by elaborate court formations, delicately carved wooden windows, and terraced roofs, these structures were a testament to the architectural and creative splendor of this period. Sens opened up — their palace-building was practical, attractive and strategically valuable, and revealed their skill in statecraft and governance.

4.5.2 Irrigation and land management: the agricultural infrastructure

The economy of the whole Sen dynasty was based on agriculture, and irrigation development was related to the maintenance of agrarian production. The Sens particularly encouraged the construction of irrigation canals, embankments, and reservoirs designed to drive agricultural production. Irrigation facilities were constructed which included the crops of rice, wheat and millet that ensured food security and economic stability (Sharma, 1997).

They started quite a few important irrigation projects, such as an extension to the old canal networks in the fertile Terai region. These same programs not only elevated agricultural output,

they also supported trade and commerce through the availability of goods for sale in local and regional markets (Regmi, 1978). Through their investment in irrigation infrastructure, the Sens not only promoted economic prosperity for their kingdom, they ensured a strong agrarian underpinning for the kingdom they were creating.

4.5.3 Infrastructure development and its socio-economic impact

The costs of the Sens investment in infrastructure had ramifications beyond just Nepali society and the economy. Temple and palace construction stimulated religious devotion and administrative efficiency and irrigation systems ensured agricultural success. These developments facilitated population growth, urbanization, and increased commercial activity, transforming the economic and social structure of Sen's Domain (Whelpton, 2005).

In addition to generating jobs for artisans, laborer and farmers, the Sens' infrastructure projects fostered a sense of socio-economic interdependence among the various strata. The architectural and irrigation advancements of the Sen period were then built upon and expanded by successive kings.

Closing notes-

A couple of subspecies later, Sens threw off the chains of Nepalese infrastructure-intensive life, and now you cannot throw a stone from Vishnu to Shiva without hitting a palace or temple or irrigation system that the Sens created. They also contributed to the economic sustainability of these regions with a higher agricultural output along with strengthening both religious and administrative systems. The Sens' infrastructural prowess in Nepal left a legacy, providing a historical framework for how governance, economy, and culture interacted under their rule.

4.6 Religion, Art, and Literature

The Sen dynasty, ruling different places of Nepal from the 15th century to the 18th century, played a vital role in the transfer of Hindu traditions, temple establishments, and religious functions. Not only did their promotion of Hinduism help consolidate their claim to legitimate kingship, it was good for the development of Nepali culture and art. Exploration– this chapter explores society and cultural identity in the Sen period, including how Hindu customs, temple architecture, and religious rites affected the culture.

4.6.1 Social Impact of Hindu Traditions

The Sens were staunch Hindus, and they aggressively spread its desires across their realms. The defining features of Hinduism during their reign were strict adherence to the caste system, proliferation of sacred texts, and the performance of Vedic rituals. The critical importance of the royal palace in supporting Brahmins, sakshis (Brahmin scholars) and kustoos (temple caretakers) to ensure the preservation of scriptural learning and religious traditions (Gellner 1992).

Hindu holidays — such as Dashain and Tihar — were codified as state-sponsored celebrations, making them even more significant in the sociopolitical framework. Under the Sens, there was gradually growing inclusion of Hindu values into the fabric of the kingdom as the Sens promoted these traditions. They also encouraged Sanskrit education, which led to the compilation and preservation of Hindu texts and mythology (Witzel, 2006).

4.6.2 Tribal and Agropastoral Temple Architecture

Sens played a vital and vital part in temple's construction and renovation which used to be the focal point of religious activities as well as cultural activities. The tillers of temples constructed under their rule, which were a melange of native and Indian forms that unquestionable drawn from both Nagara and Pagoda idiom. Several large temples were constructed in honor of deities such as Shiva, Vishnu, and Durga during the reign of the Sen emperors, which temples remain to be crucial sacred sites currently (Pant 2002).

The Makwanpur Durbar temples, Kankalini Temple, and Palpa-based temples are among the notable Sen-period temples. These edifices were made with regional materials like delicately sculpted wooden struts, stone ornamentation, terracotta decorations, etc. These temples included creative features corresponding to sequences in Hindu mythology drawn from the widely read epics Ramayana and Mahabharata (Regmi, 1978).

4.6.3 Culturally-Embedded Ritualistic and Religious Practices

Under the Sens, vedic ceremonies, tantric worship, and pilgrimage customs, religious rites were a major part of life and were much promoted. For their divine right to reign, rulers engaged in public ceremonies such rajasuya and obscene sacrifices. Along with enhancing the political power of the monarchy, these rituals improved the rapport between kings and religious leaders (Sharma, 1997).

Priests, often hereditary, led daily temple ceremonies including food offerings, incense, and prayers to the divine. Devotional music and dances, including traditional bhajans, were

performed in the temple courtyard during religious festivals, indicating the deep interconnection between art and spirituality (Whelpton, 2005). The Sens also participated in the preservation of the Hindu shrines and the management of the routes and resting places for the convenience of the pilgrims.

4.6.4 The Sen Contribution to Literature and Arts

A huge part of Sen dynasty literature is said to be influenced by Hindu religious philosophy. The kings patronised poets and learned men to compose works in Sanskrit and Maithili, most of which were religious in nature. It was a time when bhakti poetry flourished with verses in praise of Krishna, Shiva, and Devi focusing on spiritual surrender or mystical love for God (Regmi, 1963).

Manuscripts and palm-leaf writings were on then painstakingly copied and maintained, helping the transference of Hindu scriptures over the ages. Traditional knowledge systems, covering astrology, ayurveda and philosophical treatises were necessarily preserved and transmitted through temple libraries and educational institutions, becoming the patronage of the Sens (Gellner, 1992).

Closing summary—

The Sen dynasty accompanied in an era of Hinduism, with its customs, temples, and rituals, which had a lasting effect on Nepal's religious and cultural landscape. The Sens supported architectural temples, ritualistic activity, and literary achievement as a manifestation of their dedication to Hinduism. Not only did these contributions cement the monarchy in power and reinvigorate classic Hindu traditions, but they helped shape a legacy still visible in Nepalese religious customs today.

4.7 Art and architecture under the Sen rulers.

Over the period from the 15th to the 18th centuries, several rulers from the Sen dynasty governed various regions of Nepal and they greatly contributed to art and architecture of Nepal. The ensuing temple construction, palace architecture, and indigenous artistic traditions interspersed with harmonies of neighboring nations persisted throughout their rule. This chapter will explore the artistic and architectural achievements made during the reign of the Sen monarchs, emphasizing their stylistic characteristics and socio-cultural significance, as well as their enduring effect on the historical trajectory of Nepal.

4.7.1 Temple Architecture under Sens

The Sen rulers were known for building some of the most important Hindu temples, both for pilgrimage and also as sites for Hindu culture. The pagoda and shikhara architectural forms of the temples built under their patronage were reflective of Indian influence with some local and indigenous forms (Pant, 2002). The Makwanpur Durbar temples, the Kankalini Temple, and the Palpa temples, each with their own exquisite woodcarvings, terracotta ornamentation, and sculptural embellishments that depict gods and mythological tales, are prime examples.

The Sens had also promoted building wrought stone and brick temples with vaulted struts and toranas (ornamental gateways) that embodied the real Nepalese craftsmanship. The one cause was of a religious nature while other identified the reigning monarchs with divine figures which not only had a religious purpose but also enhanced the power of the monarchs (Regmi, 1978).

Palace and Fort Architecture

In addition to religious establishments, the Sens' architectural legacy comprised of forts and palaces critical to administrations and the country's defense. Among Sen's most extraordinary constructions was the Makwanpur Palace, which functioned as a royal residence and military fortress. The architecture is characterized by the multi-tiered roofs, intricately carved wooden windows, and defensive walls, representing a blend of artistic ornamentation and military ingenuity (Sharma, 1997).

Sen monarchs constructed forts and administrative edifices at strategic points in addition to palaces so as to keep trade routes and areas under their thumb. The use of locally sourced materials for these structures, including bricks, stone, and lumber, ensured durability while also reflecting the architectural history of the region.

Sculpture and painting are among the artistic traditions

Also notable for its advances as a period of sculpture and painting, the Sen period is especially known for its artistic developments of the Hindu deities and other religious topics. Sen's patronage saw the creation of stone and metal sculptures displaying remarkable intricacy, with deities depicted in dynamic poses and enhanced with symbolic ornamentation (Gellner, 1992). The artisanship on temple icons and ceremonial relics shows a deep-rooted tradition of metal casting and stone carving.

The Sens emphasised wall murals and book drawings, particularly in religious and regal settings. These paintings often depicted religious characters, heavenly creatures, and regal

situations, emphasising the creative process and spiritual purpose (Whelpton, 2005). The Sens did not create many "design schools" during their period, but they did cultivate a visual culture to compliment their architectural achievements.

4.7.2 Influence on Subsequent Architectural Styles

The architectural and artistic advancements of Sen kings set the stage for future developments in Nepalese architecture. Elemental stylistic features, like tiered roofs, intricately designed toranas, and decorative metalwork were carried into temple and palace architecture, where they were appropriated from faith to faith, dynasty to dynasty, and continued to determine Nepalese aesthetics well into the modern age (Regmi, 1963).

Moreover, the Sens' focus on sacred and ceremonial architecture has been foundational in shaping the urban and cultural landscape of Nepal. The literary legacy of the temples they built is evident in preserving historical sites, with the ongoing religious practices in the temples they developed still attesting to the work of artists.

Closing analysis—

The Sen emperors were responsible for some of the most beautiful art and architecture produced in Nepal and for their contribution, the Sen emperors are still remembered today and are a vital part of the cultural identity of Nepal. Not only did the Sens further their political and religious power through grand temples and palaces and war sculptures, but they also helped shape Nepal's artistic legacy. Their patronage of architectural and creative enterprises established a cultural platform that future generations can build on, making sure that the artistic traditions of the Sen period continue to play a significant role in Nepal's heritage.

4.8 Literature and royal patronage of scholars.

The Sen rulers of Nepal who ruled from the 15th to the 18th centuries patronized professors, poets, and religious authors who kept alive literary traditions. Some of their courts grew into there seat of great intellectual activity, wherein flourished Sanskrit, Maithili and Newari literature. In this chapter, we analyze the Sens' role in literizing and the sponsorship of intellectuals with the long-term importance of their contributions to Nepalese literary history.

4.8.1 How Sen Rulers Affected Literary Growth

Sens were deeply devoted to literature as a tool of cultural preservation and political legitimation. They encouraged religious treatises, scholarly treatises, and historical chronicles that reinforced Hindu customs and moral order (Regmi, 1963). In fact many literary works were closely connected to temple devotion and before deities such as Vishnu, Shiva, and Durga (Gellner, 1992). The literary and religious activities of this period were closely linked with temple worship, Vaishnava, and Shaivite traditions (Subedi, 1997).

4.8.2 The court patronage and literary centres

The courts of Sen kings, especially in Makwanpur, Palpa and Chaudandi, attracted some of the most distinguished scholars of their time. Poets and scribes received patronage from the monarchs in the form of monetary aid, land confiscations and ceremonial privileges, which promoted a flourishing literary environment (Witzel, 2006). Sanskrit became the dominant literary language, with regional languages gaining prominence.

The Sens enthusiastically advocated the preservation and reproduction of ancient religious texts such as the Vedas, Puranas, and the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. These texts were meticulously copied and preserved in temple libraries for their transmission through the ages (Sharma, 1997).

4.8.3 Key Authors and Works in the Field

It was under the Sens that some of the major works in literature had produced, especially in the areas of religious philosophy, law, and poetry. Another important development during this period was the production of comments of Hindu scriptures and translation of Sanskrit works into Maithili and Nepali languages to make them more widely available (Pant, 2002).

His Dharmasastra literature was later refined by scholars in the Sen courts who presented legal and ethical precepts derived from the Hindu tradition. Few poets composed religious poetry and epics in praise of Hindu gods and to assert the governing dynasty's divine authority (Regmi 1978).

4.8.4 Literary Styles and Themes

The emperors' Hindu devotion is reflected in the Sen period literature which put special importance on the religious (Bhakti) topic. There were many poems around Krishna, Shiva and Devi poems and with mysticism and spirituality, in general. There was also an increase in the historical chronicles at the time, which recorded the genealogies and feats of the ruling elites (Whelpton, 2005).

Another significant component of Sen-era literature was the creation of didactic and ethical

literature designed to educate monarchs and officials on good administration. These books were inspired by Arthashastra and Manusmriti and prescribed statecraft, justice, and righteous leadership (Gellner, 1992).

4.8.5 Impact on Subsequent Literary Traditions

This foundation set up by the literary productions of the Sen age paved the way for further development of Nepalese literature. The first rhyme and generic developments in their time influenced imitative poets and intellectuals and left a legacy in the literary traditions of Kathmandu Valley and beyond. Besides, the Sens' commitment to theological and philosophical inquiry enabled them to conserve Hindu intellectual traditions in Nepal which assured the cultural continuity (Regmi, 1963).

Under the Sens arose a manuscript culture which preserved classical works many of which can still be seen at study. Its patronage ensured that literary activity continued to be an integral part of Nepalese culture, including both oral and written traditions (Sharma, 1997).

Conclusion

Sen kings were patron of literature aiding in funding for intellectual activities in Nepal. This sponsorship led to the writing of religious, philosophical and historical books, many of which exist today as part of Nepal 's heritage. By promoting intellectuals and literature groups, the Sens were responsible for the continuation and nurturing of intellectual trends that shape Nepalese literature even today.

Chapter 5: The Sen Rule in Palpa

5.1 The Rise of the Palpa Sen Dynasty

This royal dynasty was a significant aspect of the mediaeval history of Nepal, affecting the political and cultural dynamics of the Himalayas. Consolidating their position through military exploits, diplomacy and administrative reforms, the Sen kings of Palpa rose in the era of administrative fragmentation in the so-called Chaubisi Rajya (24 principalities). This chapter explores the rise of the dynasty through the lens of notable figures, territorial growth, and social political achievements backed by historical records (i.e., unpublished letters, academic libraries).

5.1.1 Historical Background and Origins

Sen Dynasty Late 15th century originated in the Palpa area of present Nepal. Palpa evolved, as state of semi autonomous little from Chaubisi Rajya. The dynasty gained prominence under kings including Mukunda Sen (1518–1553), who expanded its sphere of influence through military conquests, including an invasion of the Kathmandu Valley in 1524. In this note, Singh (1987) asserts that the unpublished letters of King Bhupati Sen (1711-1715 B.S.) provide insight into the administrative policies of the dynasty as well as its network of communication, underscoring its significance in regional diplomacy.

5.1.5 Major Powers and their Strengths

Palpa reached its epitome under Mukunda Sen. His invasion of Kathmandu Valley was as much a military display as it was about controlling commercial routes. His strength in the history to dominate in western Nepal was described with his skill to balance aggressive and relationship.

Govardhan Sen - Diplomacy and Governance

Letters written by Bhupati Sen, discovered by means of archival research, show his attempts to stabilise the empire through correspondence with surrounding rulers. Emphasising tax changes and cultural support, these accords helped unite Palpa internally.

Following the death of Mukunda Sen in 1553, Palpa fragmented into multiple principalities due to succession disputes and foreign intervention. This decline was symptomatic of broader instability in the Chaubisi Rajya system and would set the stage for the Shah Dynasty's rise to power in a united Nepal.

5.1.6 Socio-political Legacy

The legacy of the Palpa Sen Dynasty is the fusion of Hindu political models with indigenous practices. Other aspects of their administration, such as land transfers to temples and formalised legal systems, influenced later Nepalese administrations. This dynasty, in their emphasis on records, (e.g., Bhupati Sen's letters) added to the historical documentation of Nepal.

Closing remarks,

This new dynasty won huge military successes and a comprehensive peace process in Nepal, demonstrating the interplay between battle, diplomacy, and cultural innovation in mediaeval times. Although internal instability ultimately led to its demise, its legacy lives on in regional historiography and historical documents. Examining primary sources, including unpublished letters, might provide a deeper understanding of this vital time period.

5.2 Interaction with Neighboring Kingdoms

The Sen Dynasty Mediaeval Nepal was greatly shaped by the Sen dynasty, particularly aspects of political interactions with the neighbouring kingdoms. The Sen kings of Makwanpur, Bijaypur, Palpa, and Chaudandi engaged in diplomatic pacts, military skirmishes, trading networks, and cultural exchanges with regional forces like the Gorkha Kingdom, the Kathmandu Valley Malla states, and Indian polities to the east like Bengal and Mithila. These transactions affected the political stability and territorial expansion of the Sen rule.

5.2.1 Foreign Relations And Partnerships

Such alliances with neighbouring Nepali and Indian states maintained the Sen's territorial integrity and economic stability. After King Subha Sen and later King Digbandhan Sen in Makwanpur conspired to marry into the Malla rulers of Kathmandu Valley in order to neutralize increasing Gorkhali threats (Regmi, 1965). Digbandhan Sen's daughter's marriage to Prithvi Narayan Shah is a typical example of power balance through diplomatic marriages in Makwanpur and Gorkha (Sharma, 2004).

Sen rulers of Bijaypur and Chaudandi similarly maintained political relations with the rulers of Mithila and Bengal, sending emissaries to each other and agreed to military alliance. Such alliances became important as Mughal wealth and power expanded in eastern India, and British agents advanced into this region after 1760 (Stiller, 1995).

5.2.2 Feuds of the Gorkha Kingdom

One of the seminal interactions of the Sen Dynasty was its military engagements with Gorkha. Gorkha was on the rise under Prithvi Narayan Shah. Expansionist Lore of the Gorkha Ruler against Makwanpur and Bijaypur led to direct confrontation.

In 1762, the Gorkhalis assaulted Makwanpur, overcoming King Digbandhan Sen and incorporating the city into the spreading Gorkha Empire (Pradhan 2012). The strategic importance of conquering Makwanpur for Gorkha was that it opened the path to Bengal and external trade routes which would really bolster Gorkha's economy (Vansittart, 1915).

The Gorkha forces captured their next targets, Bijaypur and Chaudandi, in 1773, effectively ending Sen dominance in eastern Nepal. The wars with Gorkha were not only responsible for the dismemberment of the Sen states, but also led to the unification of Nepal under the rule of the Shah dynasty (Shrestha, 2007).

5.2.3 Trade and Economic Exchanges.

In spite of occasional hostilities, the Sen rulers took part in the economic exchanges of culture with neighbouring countries. Makwanpur was indeed a commercial centre of local importance that linked Nepal with Bengal and Tibet, trading in salt, grains, textiles, and metalware (Regmi, 1984). For Gorkha, one of the reasons for seeking annexation of Makwanpur was its economic strength: whoever controlled this territory would ensure a monopoly over trans-Himalayan trade (Kirkpatrick, 1811).

The Sen rulers also encouraged economic relations with the Malla states, especially in

artisanal goods, luxury products and religious artefacts. The growth of cities like Bijaypur and Palpa largely relied on their convenient location on trading lanes and agricultural lands (Gurung, 2011)

5.2.4 Interactions between religions and cultures

As the Sen rulers were important donors for Hinduism, Vaishnavism, and local animistic traditions, they promoted cultural exchanges with surrounding regions. Temples, dharmashalas (a kind of pilgrim rest house), and Sanskrit education centers in Mithila, Bengal, and Nepal reinforced religious and scholarly connections (Mishra, 1973).

Collaboration between Sen kings in the region, and those in the Kathmandu Valley, also manifested in architecture and the arts, a stylistic similarity is notably displayed in the temples located in Palpa, sharing an influence of both Newar craftsmanship, and Mithila-style designs (Dixit, 2002; Mackenzie, 2021). These exchanges not only promoted regional unity but also contributed to the conservation and dissemination of Nepali art and the religious traditions associated with it.

Key takeways—

The Sen Dynasty engaged diplomatically with neighboring kingdoms, engaged in war, traded with neighboring states, and engaged in cultural patronage. The alliances with the Mallas, Mithila and Bengal made their rule stronger as the Gorkha's conflicts with them eventually resulted in their down fall and the unification of the Nepal state under Shah rule. Nevertheless, the historical, cultural and political fabric of Nepal is still shaped by the legacy of the Sen rulers.

5.3 Political and Military Strategies

Palpa had a good defense: military fortifications at Tansen, Butwal, and Ruru Kshetra. The fortification gave these forts natural security advantages due to the mountainous terrain of Palpa (Vansittart, 1915). The Sen monarchs constructed watch towers and military garrisons to monitor movements along vital commerce and invasion routes.

Palpa's hilltop forts were vital in repelling attacks from Gorkha and the surrounding Baisi-Chaubisi states during wars. Military tactics used against advances by the enemy included underground tunnels and surprise attacks.

5.3.1 Against Gorkha and neighbouring states.

The most notable military challenge for Palpa was the expansionist campaign of Prithvi Narayan Shah. Palpa was initially neutral; it then fought a series of skirmishes against invading forces of the Gorkhalis (Regmi 1984).

In 1763, Gorkha invaded Palpa's frontier lands but were unsuccessful against Prithvipati Sen's elite army and fortifications (Stiller, 1995). Nevertheless, with several military confrontations, Palpa came under Gorkhali too in 1804, ending independence of Sen rule (Sharma, 2004).

Apart from the skirmishes with Gorkha, Palpa also had territorial conflicts with neighbouring Tanahun, Parbat, and Gulmi. The Baisi and Chaubisi polities tended to be rapidly shifting, which meant that Palpa's military had to be quite flexible and mobile.

The Use of Cavalry and War Elephants

According to Shrestha (2007), the Palpa Sens had a large cavalry army and war elephants brought from Butwal lowland during their conflicts. Palpa's deployment of elephants in conflicts with Tanahun and Gulmi provided an advantage in open field combat.

War elephants were ineffective in Nepal's rough terrain, in contrast to Gorkha's guerrilla warfare and better strategy. Gorkhali's use of speed, encirclement, and deception tactics effectively reduced Palpa's military capacity (Pradhan, 2012).

Key takeways—

The Palpa Sen kings had used a centralised government, strategic diplomacy, and military fortifications to maintain stability in their kingdom. For generations, they flourished due to their political connections, economic clout and military power. But Gorkha's expansion under Prithvi Narayan Shah became an existential threat. Palpa originally resisted, but had by 1804 been folded into the expanding Gorkhali Empire, bringing an end to independent Sen sovereignty in western Nepal.

Almost forgotten, the Palpa Sens were defeated militarily, yet their legacy of governance, cultural patronage, and impregnable forts left an indelible mark on Nepal's history.

5.4 Cultural and Religious Patronage

The Palpa Sen Dynasty played an important role in shaping western Nepal's cultural and religious identity. The Sen rulers were enthusiastic patrons of Hinduism, local aboriginal traditions, and the arts, facilitating the construction of temples, the patronage of religious festivals, and the promotion of classical architecture. Their civilizational efforts also influenced Palpa's religious life, cultural creativity, and educational establishments, making it a key religious and cultural centre. This chapter investigates the religious patronage, architectural developments, literary contributions, and cultural effect of the Sen kings of Palpa.

The Palpa Sen kings were patrons of Hinduism and constructed temples.

The Palpa Sen had roles in court or personal life where they were staunch Hindus who strongly supported Hindu customs, festivals and temple building. They patronized Brahmins and scholars, which helped spread Hind on religious doctrines and education in Sanskrit (Regmi, 1965).

The Bhagwati Temple in Tansen, dedicated to Goddess Bhagwati, is one of the most well-known religious monuments built by the Palpa Sen kings (Sharma (2004). The temple was constructed in Pratap Sen's reign and became a place of worship and public meetings.

In addition, the Sens erected temples devoted to Shiva, Vishnu and other Hindu deities, linking themselves to the larger Hindu community. Their patronage nurtured Ruru Kshetra, a celebrated pilgrimage site north of Palpa, to which Hindu pilgrims flocked from Nepal and India (Mishra, 1973).

5.4.1 Ancestor veneration in Indigenizing Native Traditions

Although Hinduism was still the leading religion, the Palpa Sen kings promoted local animistic and indigenous traditions, especially those followed by the Magars, Gurungs and other indigenous communities living in the area (Shrestha, 2007). They employed local rites and nature-worship traditions, incorporating shamanism and folklore into the larger theological framework. This syncretism fostered social concord and political stability.

5.4.2 Vacations and Religious Observances

Sens were great and generous patrons and sponsors of big Hindu festivals such as Dashain, Tihar, Shivaratri, and Krishna Janmashtami. They were not only religious occasions, they were in fact overarching political tools for establishing their dominance and (Dixit, 2013).

The colourful Dashain celebration organised in royal patronage in Tansen were marked by animal sacrifices, traditional music and cultural shows. Such feats proved the prowess and legitimacy of the Sen kings, thus over scoring their divine mandate to rule.

5.4.3 Palpa Sen Dynasty Architectural Contributions

Palpa became a hot spot for architecture during Sen's rule. These different architectural elements of Newar, Mughal, and indigenous hill architecture resulted in the formation of a separate Palpali architectural identity (Dixit 2002) The most famous of these is the Rani Mahal, a splendid palace set on the bank of the Kali Gandaki River.

Rani Mahal is known as the Taj Mahal of Nepal. It built in 1893 to honor the wife of General Khadga Shamsher Rana (Sen), who ruled Palpa, was designed and constructed under influences of Mughal and European architecture (Regmi, 1984). Construction continued until after the Sen monarchs lost direct control there, but it reinforces their relevance in Palpa's cultural hierarchy. Although the Rani Mahal was built during the Rana period after the direct reign of the Sen kings, the area with its strong reputation and the title 'Sen' established by the Sen kings against the historical backdrop of Palpa has a special cultural continuity in Nepalese history (Regmi, 1984)

More architectural wonders include:

Tansen Durbar was the administrative and cultural center of Palpa. Tansen Temples that have intricate wood carvings, pagoda-style roofs, and terracotta decorations resembling to Newar culture.

5.4.4 Reservation of animistic religion and culture

Preservation of historic shrines and sacred sites was a top priority for the Sen kings, who understood their cultural and spiritual value. They also played important roles in securing and reconstructing, Ruru Kshetra, Tansen Bhagwati Temple and local shrines (Pradhan, 2012)

The Sens also promoted the establishment of dharmashalas (rooms for the accommodation of pilgrims) and the installation of public water taps (hiti) near the sacred sites, positioning themselves as guardians of religious welfare.

5.4.5 Literary and artistic contributions

Hindu scholars, Sanskrit education, archaeologists, Vedas, Puranas and Dharmashastras were also promoted by the Palpa Sen kings. Brahmin priests and academics from Mithila and the Kathmandu Valley were summoned to teach Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy (Mishra 1973).

A number of the religious writings were written on special palm leaves, and many were preserved in temples and monasteries, contributing to Nepal's intellectual history as well.

Palpa turned into a major hub for folk music and dances inspired by the hollows of the hill and the Terai. Here are some of the more common traditional musical styles:

Palpali Dohori (Folk Duets)

Madal drum music (Madal drum music): Gaine Geet (Gandharva bards songs) thrived under the sponsorship of local monarchs. These traditions were instrumental in maintaining community identity and oral history, "allowing for the continuance of indigenous narratives."

In addition, the Sen kings patronized theatrical performances and similar storytelling traditions, especially those focused on Hindu epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata (Sharma 2004).

5.4.6 The Collision and Destruction of The Palpa Sen Dynasty

The dissolution of the Palpa Sen dynasty in 1804 and the rise of Gorkha under Prithvi Narayan Shah brought about a gradual decline of direct royal patronage of religion and culture (Stiller 1995). However, the Spirits' legacy hasn't been extinguished; the temples, festivals, and customs of the Sens remain alive and well, very much part of what shapes Palpa's identity today.

Tansen, Ruru Kshetra, and the areas around continue to possess cultural imprints from the Sen era, as annual religious celebrations and crunchy architectural monuments here preserve the past and its significance.

Conclusion

Palpa Sen dynasty contributed towards defining the religious and cultural landscape of western Nepal. They also made significant contributions to Nepal's diverse cultural history through their support for Hinduism, tolerance for indigenous traditions, architectural innovations, literary patronage, and sponsorship of folk music. Although their political power has diminished, their cultural legacies are safely embedded with Nepal's religious and artistic consciousness.

The temples, shrines, and festivals that blossomed under the Sen kings continue to play an important part in safeguarding Nepal's spiritual and historical identity, ensuring their legacy is long-lasting.

5.5 Decline and Legacy in Palpa

The Palpa Sen dynasty and western Nepal Main political, cultural and economic contribution for centuries. But like many a mediaeval kingdom, its rule was ended by shifting political balances, military invasion and the rise of a more centralising figure—the Gorkha Kingdom under Prithvi Narayan Shah. The formal end of Sen sovereignty was in 1804, with Gorkha's takeover of Palpa, but its cultural and historical legacy lives on to this day in far western Nepal. This chapter explores the factors that led to the fall of the Palpa Sen dynasty and its historical legacy.

Internal speculations and weak succession processes

One of the primary reasons for the decline of the Palpa Sen Dynasty was internal strife as well as poor leadership. Unlike earlier Sen monarchs whose administrative framework had strengthened, the later Sen kings had to grapple with succession disputes and power struggles. The kingdom became more vulnerable to external attacks as internal divisions widened (Regmi, 1965).

Moreover, because of lack of unity among the Chaubisi Rajya (24 principalities), Palpa could not depend on a strong regional alliance when Gorkha forces came (Stiller 1995).

5.5.1 Army's Vulnerability towards Gorkha Expansion

The single most deadly factor in Palpa's fall was the death of the Palpa military at the hands of Gorkha. Prithvi Narayan Shah made more systematic use of superior military tactics, psychological warfare, and diplomatic overreaching to annex many of these Nepalese states (Pradhan, 2012). The Gorkhalis made an unsuccessful attempt to seize Palpa in 1763, and the attack failed King Prithvipati Sen turned them back (Shrestha, 2007).

Yet, in 1804, the Gorkhali soldiers under the command of King Rana Bahadur Shah and his successors initiated a decisive invasion, ultimately leading to the permanent annexation of Palpa into the Gorkha Empire (Sharma, 2004).

The steep terrain and entrenched defences of Palpa initially provided the Sens an advantage, but the superior coordination, mobile warfare tactics, and political connections between Gorkha and other states ultimately brought about Palpa's downfall (Vansittart, 1915).

Disruption of Economic and Trade Activities.

The economic dominance of Palpa depended on its control over trade routes linking Nepal, Tibet, and India. However, as Gorkha developed, it started to dominate key trade routes, diminishing Palpa's economic power (Regmi, 1984).

Beyond losing access to trans Himalayan trade routes, which created a burden for defence against Gorkha, increasing military expenditure drained the kingdom's resources (Kirkpatirck, 1811).

5.5.2 Failure to form regional alliances

The Palpa Sens did not have foreign military backing, unlike the Malla kings of Kathmandu Valley who tried to forge ties with the British East India Company. Their extraction from geopolitical dynamics prevented a counteraction to Gorkha's increasing strength

(Gurung, 2011).

The Chaubisi confederacy was split even in Nepal, and Palpa often clashed with adjacent states, which made the organisation of a coherent defence strategy hard prior to the invasion (Sharma, 2004).

5.5.3 The Aftermath and Legacy of the Palpa Sen Dynasty

Palpa was annexed in 1804, and Gorkha kings built on the administrative, military and economic systems that had accrued under Palpa's authority (Pradhan, 2012). The Tansen Durbar Palace was turned into a regional administrative centre whilst the Sen military outposts were integrated into the Gorkhali army. Both the systems of economy such as taxation and trade rules were in line with the overall Gorkha regime.

Although they no longer held political power, many Sen family members were given ceremonial positions in the new Gorkha rule (Shrestha, 2007).

Breaches of Cultural and Religious Contributions

Even after its political demise, the cultural and religious impact of Palpa Sen Dynasty can be perceived today. The Sens were big charitable donors, endowing Hindu temples, religious festivals, and local customs, and many of their contributions are now listed within Nepal's history as its benevolent gifts to the land (Dixit, 2002).

The Bhagwati Temple in Tansen, and Ruru Kshetra have helped the development of religious tourism since religious pilgrims specifically visit these places (Mishra, 1973). Palpa's annual Dashain festivals and other Hindu ceremonies reflect traditions that were developed under Sen's leadership.

During the Sen period, Tansen developed a unique architectural style that combined Newar and Mughal influences, which continues to characterise the town today (Regmi, 1984).

5.5.4 Folk Traditions and Oral History

The folk songs and storytelling traditions of Palpa that preserve stories about Sen kings, battles and historical events. Oral traditions like Gaine geet (folk ballads) provide narratives about Sens, their prominence, and conflicts with Gorkha (Gurung, 2011).

Palpa's cultural identity survives the tides of political change as local cultural organizations still continue to perform the traditional music and dances that formed a part of old Sen-era court, and religious festivities (Sharma 2004).

5.5.5.Impact on Nepali Political History

The defeat of the Palpa Sen dynasty was a part of the whole of Nepal getting unified under the Shah kings. However, the administrative structure, land revenue system and military organization of the Sens influenced subsequent political development in Nepal (Stiller, 1995).

Literature on Palpa governance, even today, informs us about the medieval political system in Nepal, helping historians understand what do historians see what were the challenges of Nepal unification process (Regmi 1965).

Key takeways—

The decline of the Palpa Sen Dynasty which was primarily due to internal turmoil,

economic woes, Gorkha Military defeat and inability to build strong alliances beyond Palpa. Since their political demise however, the Sens' cultural and religious legacy remains felt throughout the western region of Nepl.

The temples, festivals, architecture and folk tradition of the Palpa Sen kings have remained a significant heritage of the history and culture of Nepal. Nepal's history is a rich and diverse tapestry, and the medieval history of Nepal with the presence of Malla kings in the blocks of history is a vivid time of competitors, dynamics, and history, which helps us learn so much about the changing culture and energy of power in the age.

Chapter 6: The Sen Dynasty and the Baisi & Chaubisi States

6.1 The Sen Rulers in the Baisi & Chaubisi Confederation

The Sen kings of Palpa was one of the most powerful amongst Chaubisi Confederacy. Under rulers such as Rudra Sen and Prithvipati Sen, Palpa's power increased through strategic alliances with neighbouring states such as Tanahun, Gulmi and Arghakhanchi (Sharma, 2004).

Palpa was a fulcrum between its rival kingdoms and the balance of authority in the Chaubisi Confederacy. When Sen kings were there they had huge armed forces which complemented the strategic position of Palpa to serve in the capacity of a defensive fort in the region (Regmi, 1984). Yet internal feuds and changing alliances undermined the confederacy and left it open to external incursions, particularly from the burgeoning Gorkha state.

The rulers of Makwanpur, notably Digbandhan Sen, were prominent members of the Baisi Confederacy, engaging in relations with bordering states like Doti, Salyan and Bijayapur. Makwanpur served as an important economic center, as it controlled the routes to Bengal and Tibet (Gurung, 2011).

Sen rulers formed diplomatic and military alliances within the Baisi Confederacy (Kirkpatrick, 1811) to protect their commercial interests. The Baise Confederacy, similar to the Chaubisi republics, degenerated into infighting and this proved fatal to a concerted response to external threats, particularly that posed by Gorkha and British India.

6.1.1 Internal military conflicts and rivalries among Confederate states

Baisi and Chaubisi alliances regularly fought against each other despite their treaties. These struggles for power weakened the defenses of the region against outsiders' incursions (Stiller 1995). Palpa's Sen kings fought wars intermittently with neighbouring Tanahun and Gulmi, battling for dominance in important trade routes and fertile land. Likewise, the Makwanpur Sens fought against Bijaypur and Chaudandi as well as foreign challenges from Bengal. Such disputes complicated any unification amongst the confederacies when Gorkha embarked on its expansionist ambitions in the mid-18th century.

6.1.2 Sen Rulers and Gorkha Unification Campaign

The excise of Prithvi Narayan Shah in Gorkha made a severe threat to Baisi and Chaubisi confederacies. His campaign of diplomatic, military, and economic isolation systematically undermined the pillars of power of these alliances.

In 1762, when King Digbandhan Sen was overthrown, Gorkha took over Makwanpur,

thus gaining access to the trade routes of Bengal (Shrestha, 2007).

In 1804, however, Gorkha soldiers conquered Palpa (Sharma, 2004), which had initially resisted open conflict, and the Sen grip over the region came to a formal end.

Urging upon divide and conquer tactics, military efficiency, and tactics of siege warfare, the Gorkhali forces crushed the Chaubisi and Baisi confederacies one by one (Regmi, 1984).

Their inability to rally together to resist the advancing Gorkha proved to be their undoing and paved the way for Nepal to be unified under the rule of the Shah.

6.1.3 Legacy of Sen Rulers of Baisi and Chaubisi Confederacies

Despite experiencing military setbacks, the Sen kings had a considerable legacy in governance, culture, and architecture:

The Sens established land revenue systems, taxation laws and trade rules, which Gorkhali would adopt in its governance (Regmi, 1965). Infrastructural anchor of dharmashalas and temples back in Sen days are still socio-culturally relevant (Mishra, 1973).

Architectural heritage such as the forts, palaces, and temples of the Sen kings are recognized as historical sites in western Nepal (Dixit 2002).

6.1.4 Impact on History of Nepali Politics

Before unification, the Sen rulers played a crucial role in Nepal's political environment participating in the Baisi and Chaubisi confederacies. The Kings' policies, conflicts, and governing practices laid the ground for regional alliances, diplomatic engagements, and military tactics that would later be employed by the Shah kings (Shrestha, 2007).

Now, the kingly legacy of the Sen rulers in such confederacies is the most vital case in point for understanding the mediaeval political framework, inter-state relations and the process of ultimate unification in Nepal.

Key takeways—

The Sen rulers were major players in the Baisi and later in the Chaubisi confederacies, under whose hegemony they were involved in alliances, wars, economic policies and governance reforms. But internal strife and competitiveness as well as the failure to unify against the expanding might of Gorkha led to their dissolution. Their rule might have wrapped up with the unification of Nepal, but their administrative changes, religious patronage, and cultural contributions remained alive throughout Nepal's history.

6.2 Strategic Alliances & Rivalries

The Bhaise (22 states) and Chaubaisi (24 states) were among the most fragmented and complex political entities in the history of Nepal. The western and midwestern states called Chaubise gained control over functioned as semi-independent principalities led by local kings or chiefs. However, internal rivalries, power plays and changing loyalties often led to conflicts and betrayals between the allies, weakening their collective stand against foreign invasions, starting with the Gorkha territorial expansion led by Prithvi Narayan Shah.

This chapter examines the diplomatic alliances and rivalries of the Baisi and Chaubisi governments through their strategic manoeuvres, military skirmishes, and ultimate downfall during Nepal's unification process.

6.2.1 Baisi and Chaubisi Confederacies: Formation and Structure

The Baisi Confederacy ("22 states") emerged in the Karnali and Gandaki regions and the Chaubisi Confederacy ("24 states") reigned over western and central Nepal. Of necessity, these confederacies emerged as unions of smaller principalities united to protect external dynamics, regulate trade routes, and solidify jurisdiction over rival factions (Regmi, 1965).

These confederacies are not centralised governments, rather fluid political organisations in which kings would often alter alliances based on economic interests, military advantage or personal conflicts (Sharma, 2004).

Common Front: Strategic Alliances of the Baisi and Chaubisi States

Whenever threatened by invasions, the principalities of these confederacies joined forces to preserve regional stability. These states entered into the following major military alliances:

Alarmed by Tanahun and Lamjung aggressions, Palpa, Gulmi and Arghakhanchi joined forces to defend themselves.

MoU signed between Makwanpur and Bijayapur and Chaudandi to ensure trade security strengthen against Bengal (Shrestha, 2007).

The region of Jumla was often used by Doti and Salyan to shield themselves from attacks by Mughals and Rajput soldiers from India (Pradhan 2012).

These collaborations generally fell apart quickly and often, as shifts in power structure made them less useful for any prolonged resistance.

6.2.2 Business and Economic Partnerships

The Baisi and Chaubisi states would come together to form alliances due to economic interests. Here are some of the important trading partnerships:

Palpa and Butwal: The two states were trading centers, they managed the roads between Nepal and India and regularly collaborated to capture trading caravans (Gurung, 2011);

Makwanpur and the Bengal Nawabs: Makwanpur maintained an intimate commercial relationship with Bengal, which enabled access to commodities, weapons and trade revenue (Regmi, 1984).

Kaski and Kathmandu Valley: Kaski rulers kept diplomatic ties with the Malla kings of

Kathmandu to promote cultural and trade relations (Stiller, 1995)

Despite agreement on commitments to economic cooperation, economic cooperation was often undermined by trade rivals and tax problems and the effectiveness of efforts to cooperate economically and politically was dramatically reduced.

6.2.3 Conflicts and rivalries between principalities

After the Baisi and Chaubisi states–federation of 25 states– there was no single leadership which was controlling all these kings, and consequently all of them were swimming against each other. Some of the major rivalries were:

Palpa versus. Gulmi and Arghakhanchi: These neighbouring republics repeatedly fought over territorial disputes and tax money from trade routes (Regmi, 1965).

Makwanpur and Bijaypur and Chaudandi: The competing Sen rulers targeted Makwanpur due to its dominating position in eastern Nepal leading to repeated conflict over trade and trade routes (Pradhan, 2012).

Lamjung vs. Tanahun and Kaski: These countries came into conflict repeatedly while attempting to expand their influence in the Chaubisi Confederacy (Shrestha, 2007).

They so weakened the cohesiveness of the system that they made it all the simpler for external forces like the Gorkha to take advantage of their divisions.

6.2.4 Betrayal and Shifting Loyalties

Because of the ever-shifting nature of alliances, kings and warlords often changed sides when it was politically or militarily expedient to do so. Some of history's most famous betrayals and decisions to align with other powers include:

—Tanahun, initially on Kaski's side but later left for Gorkha in backing Prithvi Narayan Shah's military advancement (Stiller 1995)

Palpa was supportive to Gorkha during the former's battles with Kathmandu Valley, but after Gorkha wanted complete supremacy, Palpa revolted (Sharma, 2004).

Makwanpur had good relation with Bijayapur, but at later stage, Makwanpur left its eastern folk for systematic trade opportunities at Gorkha (Regmi 1984).

These many betrayals undermined trust among the confederacies and spelled their final destruction.

Divide and Conquer: Prithvi Narayan Shah

The expansionist dreams of Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha exploited the political differences in Baisi and Chaubisi states. Here is how he planned to do just that:

It was a Gorkha strategy to attack individual states separately and prevent them from forming defensive alliances before forming an alliance (Pradhan, 2012).

The Gurkha strategy was making temporary treaties with weaker states and eliminating stronger rivals first (Regmi, 1984).

Use trade embargoes to economically weaken enemy states, such as the Gorkha blockade against the Malla rulers of the Kathmandu Valley (Sharma, 2004).

6.2.5 The decisive defeat of the Baisi and Chaubisi Confederacies

Most of the Baisi and Chaubisi states either surrendered to the Gorkha or went for diplomatic negotiation in the late 18th century. Conquered militarily through siege warfare and frontal assault (Shrestha, 2007). The last bastion of independent Sen power, Palpa, fell in 1804, 'virtually ending the Baisi and Chaubisi confederacies (Vansittart, 1915).

Historical Background of Baisi and Chaubisi Alliances

Despite their military defeat, the Baisi and Chaubisi kingdoms had notable legacies:

Affect on Political Structure of Nepal: Most of the administrative systems and land revenue policies of confederacies were integrated into centralised governance in Nepal by the Shah monarchs (Regmi, 1965).

Cultural Preserving: The balance of the government aiding festivals or temples which echo in Nepal's cultural surrounding (Mishra, 1973).

-Lessons in Geopolitical Strategy: At the heart of many historians' efforts to understand alliances and betrayals within confederacies is a desire to master statecraft, military strategy (Stiller 1995).

The Baisi and Chaubisi confederacies were double-edged swords. Though they helped maintain regional autonomy, the differences among them, their changing loyalties, and their inability to ally against Gorkha eventually spelled their doom. Nepal's unification was made possible by Prithvi Narayan Shah's strategic diplomacy and military maneuvering that dismantled these alliances.

For all its political antiquity, the history of the Baisi and Chaubisi republics is still woven into the cultural, administrative and historical fabric of Nepal today.

6.3 Military Engagements and Regional Conflicts

So during the mediaeval times, Nepal was divided into fractious, militarised kingdoms, as exemplified through the Baisi (22 states) and Chaubisi (24 states) confederacies. These states regularly engaged in territorial fights, strategic conflicts, and shifting alliances, transforming the space into an arena of power struggles and defensive warfare. Though these confederacies sometimes came together to face foreign threats, interstate rivalries, betrayals and military fragmentation ultimately brought destruction to them all.

This chapter focuses on important military battles and regional wars of the Baisi and Chaubisi nations as it looks at their techniques of warfare, fortifications, as well as Gorkha's effects on their sizeable expansionist military campaigns.

6.3.1 Militarization in the Baisi and Chaubisi States

Each locality ruled its own additional armies, which were commanded by a local king or military dictator. These forces often consisted of infantry battalions wielding swords, spears, and arrows.

For this purpose, rich States like Palpa and Tanahun are using Cavalry Divisions to enhance battlefield mobility (Regmi, 1965).

Elephant corps: Shock attacks and transport in Makwanpur and Butwal (Shrestha, 2007).

Fortified garrisons are defensive fortresses constructed on hilltops and riverbanks for protection.

Unlike Gorkha which had a well-coordinated military, the Baisi and Chaubisi had no centre of command, which put them at a strategic disadvantage when it came to major clashes (Pradhan, 2012).

6.3.2 Defensive Strategies and Preparations

The Baisi and Chaubisi states did have natural terrain advantages and fortress-based defence strategies. Significant fortresses included Tansen Fort (Palpa), an important defensive post safeguarding trade routes (Gurung, 2011).

Makwanpurgadhi (Makwanpur Fort): a significant defensive bastion against invasions by India and the Gorkhalis (Sharma, 2004).

Jumla Fort: An outer citadel strengthened against external forces and part of Baisi confederacy (Stiller, 1995).

A collective approach to military strategy was often lacking and the existence of these defensive precautions rarely made it any easier to repel large scale invasions.

6.3.3 Limited wars between Baisi and Chaubisi states

Initially, the Baisi and the Chaubisi nations were engaged in incessant warfare, mainly pertaining to land, control of trade, and regional conquest. And here are some significant conflicts:

The Palpa-Gulmi-Arghakhanchi War: Palpa was willing to expand its domination over the neighbouring states, bringing frequent wars with Gulmi and Arghakhanchi (Regmi 1984).

Tanahun vs. Lamjung-Kaski Conflict -These two states engaged in a battle to control the Gandaki region where they fought to gain control of it resulting in a prolonged Conflict (Shrestha, 2007).

Makwanpur vs. Bijaypur and Chaudandi: Economic conflicts over the trade routes to Bengal and Tibet led to military confrontation between these eastern neighbours (Pradhan, 2012).

These wars tore the confederacies apart from the inside, which made them prey to conquest from the outside, especially of Gorkha.

6.3.4 Battles with External Forces

Besides internal disputes, the Baisi and Chaubisi states were frequently invaded by external powers.

Mughal and Rajput raiding - Doti and Jumla were frequently raided by Mughal and Rajput forces according to Kirkpatrick (1811) on the Baisi principalities of western Nepal. Although these attacks led to temporary alliances among Baisi monarchs, infighting prevented a strong collective defense (Sharma, 2004).

Gorkha's Military Expansion

The largest military threat was posed by Prithvi Narayan Shah's expansionist campaign. His armies starved and conquered the Baisi and Chaubisi states through siege warfare, direct military invasion and political maneuvering (Stiller, 1995).

Gorkha Conquest — The Downfall of Baisi and Chaubisi States

Military tactics of Prithvi Narayan Shah

Baisi and Chaubisi states were conquered by Prithvi Narayan Shah's three-point plan.

Divide and Rule: Tainting the opposition to prevent organised resistance (Pradhan, 2012)

Economic Blockades: The act of severing trade routes to economically harm an enemy nation.

Better Military Coordination: Gorkha's troops employed better logistics, intelligence, and guerilla approaches that achieved more success on the battlefield (Shrestha, 2007).

The Confederacy in Decline: A Few Major Battles

The Gorkha had attacked at Makwanpur in 1762, because of its economic importance.

King Digbandhan Sen was defeated and Makwanpur was conquered by Gorkha Empire (Sharma 2004).

Battle of Palpa (1804): Palpa initially made an effort to stay neutral, yet the state fell when it was invaded by Gorkha forces in 1804 (Vansittart, 1915). The Palpa Sen rulers were no longer independent and the region became part of the administrative outpost of the Shah dynasty (Regmi, 1965).

Conquest over Baisi Confederacy Doti, Jumla and other western kingdoms were defeated by the army of Gorkha from 1789 to 1791 (Stiller, 1995).

The last of the Baisi states to surrender was Jumla, which marks the end of the independent rule in regional status in western Nepal (Gurung, 2011).

By the early 19th century, the Baisi and Chaubisi republics had been fully absorbed into a unified Nepal under the Shah dynasty.

6.3.5 The Military Ethos of the Baisi and Chaubisi States

Though they declined, the Baisi and Chaubisi empires established significant military traditions that shaped the future of Nepal:

Fortification + Defence Architecture: A number of hilltop forts and garrison by these states still have significance in history (Dixit, 2002).

Military Strategy and Tactics: The later Gorkha army adopted some of the concepts of fights enemy as seen in the Baisi and Chaubisi (Sharma, 2004).

Nationalist Resistance and Regional Identity: Whenever the local economy faced cruel exploitation, local resistance movements emerged to challenge these external powers, indicating a determination of independence (Regmi, 1965).

It offers a lesson to the political history of Nepal; it reflects the outcome of fragmentation, changing alliances as well as military power.

Key takeways—

The Baisi and Chaubisi states pertain to warriors engaged in military warfare, interstate wars, territorial war hysteria and defensive engagement with invading armies. Though their garrisoned castles, military coalitions and trade wealth afforded them temporary advantages, they were fatally driven asunder by the absence of unity and cohesion.

Prithvi Narayan Shah's emergence of Gorkha's centralised military strength prepared the grounds for undivided Nepal. But the military history of the Baisi and the Chaubisi confederacies is an integral part of the national development of Nepal.

6.4 Cultural and Administrative Contributions

Gorkha had helped Nepal unite under its confederacies of 22 Baisi and 24 Chaubisi states which had distinguished features in defining Nepalese culture and administration. Although these principalities were scattered and often in conflict with each other, they produced major contributions in governance, legal systems, taxation, land revenue, religious patronage, and artistic traditions. The Baisi and Chaubisi states are considered the obscure foundational pieces for Nepal's contemporary political and social structures.

This chapter delves into the characteristics of governance, cultural patronage, and administrative reforms that these confederacies brought within the context of their long-standing legacies on Nepalese history.

6.4.1 Administrative systems of baisi and chaubisi states

The Baisi and Chaubisi states were semi-autonomous kingdoms, ruled by local kings or chieftains. The governance system had hierarchical structure.

The King (Raja/Maharaja) is supreme monarch and the ultimate decision-maker responsible for military, taxation and legal enforcement (Regmi, 1965).

The council of Ministers (Mantri Parishad) is composed of senior advisors who help the king in governance, policymaking, and diplomatic relations (Sharma, 2004).

Local Administrators (Amali, Subba, Mukhiya): In-charge in the regional administration, tax collection and conflict mediation.

Military Commanders (Senpati, Kaji, Sardars) – Leaders responsible for defence strategy, fortifications, and combat (Pradhan, 2012).

While the Baisi and Chaubisi were distinct feudal kingdoms, they established limited military and economic agreements with one another (Stiller, 1995). But internal strife and repeated struggles for power limited their ability to sustain a stable administrative apparatus.

6.4.2 The Judicial and Legal System

The legal system of these states was largely built on:

Family quarrels, inheritance, and social ordinances are governed by Hindu laws (Dharma Shastra-based regulations) (Mishra 1973).

Royal decrees (Sanads and Lalmohars) provided by monarchs on law and order (Regmi, 1984)

The local councils (Panchayat System) which mediated disputes and regulated community based affairs influenced Nepal's later judicial system (Shrestha, 2007).

Prithvi Narayan Shah subsequently adopted several of these judicial approaches and applied them to the unified legal system of Nepal (Pradhan, 2012).

6.4.3 System of Land Revenue and Taxation

Collection of land income was essential to the economies of the Baisi and Chaubisi states. The key taxing policies were:

Jagir system: Grants of land to military personnel and administrators in lieu of payment for services rendered (Regmi, 1965).

Raikar system: Revenue collection on government owned lands.

Brahmins, religious entities, and loyal beri (courtiers) receive tax-free property concessions through the Birta system (Regmi, 1984).

Taxes on customs and trade tariffs were a tax on merchants, especially in Makwanpur, Palpa and Tanahun that controlled important commercial routes (Gurung, 2011).

These income arrangements were adopted and altered by the Shah dynasty following their unification of Nepal (Stiller 1995).

6.4.4 Cultural Contributions of the Baisi and Chaubisi Kingdoms

The monarchs of the Baisi and Chaubisi republics were ardent patrons of Hinduism, Buddhism and indigenous local cultures. They did this in the following religious ways:

Temple Darshan — In Palpa, Tanahun, Kaski and other states, Grand temples to Shiva, Vishnu and Devi were being built (Dixit 2002)

Helpful for the Hindu Priests and the Vedic Scholars: Birta lands were given to Brahmins and religious institutions by kings (Mishra, 1973).

Festivals and Rituals promoted – Major Hindu festivals such as Dashain, Tihar, and Shivaratri would be celebrated with royal zeal.

Besides, these states allowed the co-existence of Hindu and indigenous animistic rituals, thus leading to a mixed religious culture (Sharma, 2004).

Innovations in architecture and urban growth

Forts, palaces and town centres built by Baisi and Chaubisi monarchs had some impact on Nepal's urbanisation afterwards. Among the notable constructions are:

Tansen Durbar (Palpa) is an administrative and cultural centre.

Makwanpurgadhi Fort: A means of defence and trade barrier (Regmi, 1984). They built many beautiful wood carvings with Newar carpenters and hill style temples in Kaski and Tanahun. These buildings set the basis for the later architectural advancement of Nepal under the united Shah regime.

Literature, Art, and Music

Baisi and Chaubisi republics played an important role in the spread of Sanskrit literature, folkmusic and oral storytelling traditions. Sanskrit Education centres were established in religious institutions, especially in Makwanpur and Tanahun(Mishra 1973).

Gaine Geet and Dohori Songs – Folk music traditions flourished in Palpa and Kaski by weaving historical storytelling with poetic rhythms (Gurung, 2011).

Handicrafts of Wood and Metals - Artistic works like sculptures, copper works, and paubha paintings were held in high regard by the ruling aristocracy. Several of these cultural traits remained and helped shape Nepal's national identity post-unification (Shrestha, 2007)

Effect on Nepal's Civil Service Structure

The Baisi and Chaubisi republics' governing model was later executed by the national

administration of Nepal under the Shah kings. These influences include:

Local panchayats form the base of the judicial system. Jagir and Birta land revenue regimes, which continued until the Rana dynasty (Regmi, 1965).

Regional autonomy in governance is reflected in Nepal's recent federal administrative divisions (Sharma, 2004).

Cultural and religious continuity as well.

Many temples, festivals and cultural traditions, started in these states, are still inseparable part of Nepalese culture. The pagoda-style temple architecture, and the folk musical traditions such as Dashain celebrations, originated in the mediaeval Baisi and Chaubisi states (Gurung, 2011).

Key takeways—

The Baisi and Chaubisi confederacies had significant and lasting cultural and administrative impact that survived their temporal existence. This would influence Nepal's culture, its governance systems further stimulated growth, taxation systems and religious patronage as well as legal arrangements and artistic customs. Although they fell with Gorkha's unification campaign, their legacy is still embedded in the historical, cultural and political character of Nepal.

Chapter 7: The Fall of the Sen Kingdoms

7.1 Conflicts with the Gorkha Kingdom

In the 18th century, a watershed political moment for Nepal occurred with the military campaign launched by Prithvi Narayan Shah, king of the Gorkha Kingdom, to unify the region's fractious princes. Some of the most prominent polities to collapse during this period were the Sen-ruled kingdoms of Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and Bijaypur. These wars, driven by strategic military expansions, diplomatic manoeuvring, and political rivalry, resulted in the Sen rulers' complete subjugation. The chapter discusses significant events leading to the decline of Sen kingdoms including the unification campaign of Prithvi Narayan Shah, the disintegration of Sen fortresses and the last Sen kings.

And Gorkha's ambition in military and political matters formed part of the wider regional reconfiguration characterised South Asia during the late mediaeval and early modern periods. The Sen Kingdoms, which had developed robust economic and religious institutions, posed both an opportunity and a problem for Prithvi Narayan Shah's expansionist policy. The strategic moves and wars that brought about their end is what gives us a glimpse of the political scene of Nepal back in the 18th century.

7.1.1 Unification Campaign of Prithvi Narayan Shah

Prithvi Narayan Shah, the ambitious ruler of Gorkha, dreamed of a unified Nepal free of any foreign influence, notably from the British East India Company. The unification process involved an element of meticulous planning, construction of strategic partnerships and the use of well-trained military forces (Stiller 1973). The Sen kingdoms, thanks to their geographic location and economic resources, were seen as key to this noble dream.

The military strategies of Gorkhas

Diplomatic Isolation: Prithvi Narayan Shah was successful in preventing the Sen rulers from signing treaties with other regional powers including the British in India. This ensured that his expansionist plans would not be interrupted by foreign powers by limiting outside intervention.

Economic Blockades: He imposed trade restrictions on vital paths threatening the financial viability of the Sen authorities (Regmi, 1978). Just like Makwanpur and other Sen dominated areas were vulnerable when an economic blockade occurred, putting at risk essential products.

Military Operations: Renowned for their guerrilla strategies and discipline, the Gorkhali forces conducted a number of critical attacks on the Sen fortresses, capturing on their internal divisions (Whelpton, 2005). Gorkhalis strategic military fighting such as ambush assault and

coordinated attack helped them to win crucial battles.

Prithvi Narayan Shah did not rely solely on brute force; his campaign employed psychological tactics and strategic alliances. He tried to convey the sense that this was inevitable — that dissent was futile, and joining his crusade was the only reasonable choice, the only way to survive. This duality — diplomatic and military — was vital to the conquest of the Sen kingdoms.

7.1.2 Makwanpur, Chaudandi and Bijaypur fall

Makwanpur

The first seat of the Sen kingdom, Makwanpur, succumbed in 1762. Located on trade lines between Nepal and India, Makwanpur was an important target for the Gorkhali soldiers. Prithvi Narayan Shah's forces mounted a well co-ordinated attack, rapidly taking major forts, forcing King Digbandhan Sen to surrender (Vansittart, 1915). The Gorkhalis gained better access to the Terai region and increased their economic resources with the fall of Makwanpur.

Makwanpur had a geographical advantage that would be useful for the Gorkha Kingdom facilitating its acquisition. The region's fertile soil and trade routes into the Indian plains made it a lucrative conquest. And the siege of Makwanpur was marked by systematic assaults by him on fortified positions, a network of espionage and cutting off supplies to the enemy. Not just did the surrender of Digbandhan Sen spell doom for Makwanpur but it also exposed weaknesses in the surviving Sen bastions.

Chaudandi

After capturing Makwanpur, the Gorkhalis turned their attention towards Chaudandi, another significant Sen-ruled kingdom of eastern Nepal. By the year 1773, the kingdom had weakened due to the conflicting reigns and pressures of foreign influences. The siege warfare trained military generals of Gorkhali forces weakened the defences of Chaudandi and conquered it (Regmi, 1969). The victory helped the Gorkha kingdom consolidate its hold on eastern Nepal and ensured its gradual advances towards Bijaypur.

Chaudandi's death is symbolic of the success of Gorkha's expansionist policies. The internal turmoil within the kingdom had already drained the kingdom of its military might, and the offers of Prithvi Narayan Shah's armies took advantage of this disorder. The conquest, however, was swift, and Chaudandi's inclusion into Gorkha's burgeoning empire honed the region's centralised control.

Bijaypur

The last major Sen kingdom, was lost in 1774. The kingdom, rich and cultured, presented a stupendous challenge. But conquering Chaudandi resulted in a tactical siege, compelling the King Karna Sen to retreat (Sharma, 1997). With the fall of Bijaypur, the Sen dynasty came to an end and the Gorkha obtained undisputed supremacy in eastern Nepal.

Bijaypur's defeat was significant in that it signified great consolidation of Gorkha priority in Eastern territories by means of Nepal. There was more resistance than in previous invasions, but the superior strategy and determination of the Gorkhali soldiers eventually prevailed. The capture of Bijaypur also removed the last major obstacle to the union of Nepal and established Prithvi Narayan Shah's kingdom on the road to a single, mighty nation.

7.1.3 Last Sen rulers and the fate after their conquest

They were the last Sen rulers in Nepal; their deposition marked the end of Sen Rule. Many of the Sen royal family fled to India and received asylum from different regional kings. Some merged into Nepal's new administrative unit, while others faded into obscurity (Whelpton 2005).

King Digbandhan Sen of Makwanpur was overthrown and later exiled. The exiled King Karna Sen of Bijaypur after the disintegration of his kingdom. Survived Sen Nobility: Some worked as subordinates of the new Gorkhali rulers, while others settled beyond Nepal(ese) frontiers.

The fall of the Sen kingdoms is a testimony to the nefarious transformative powers of the unification mission of Prithvi Narayan Shah. It affected the political backdrop of Nepal as well as the socio-economic structures of the region that established the foundation of a centralised Nepalese state.

Key takeways—

The conquest of the Sen kingdoms was an important milestone in the unification of Nepal. The eradicating of the Sen regime was due to the military strategy, economic policy, and diplomatic practices of Prithvi Narayan Shah. The conquest of Makwanpur, Chaudandi and Bijaypur opened the eyes of Gorkhalis and in a sense, set the tone for their vision of a united Nepal.

The rulers of Sen were strong and influential at that time and were later defeated with the growth of the Gorkhali Empire, and Sen became an independent rule. In my study, some of the kings of the Sen people who lost their kingdom were put under house arrest, and others were made to escape to the border regions. Although this political collapse brought a profound turning point in the political history of the Sen dynasty, the legacy of this period and the administrative and cultural practices they left behind continue to influence Nepalese history. It has provided me with important insights into the process of building modern Nepal and the aspect of the merger of peripheral states.

7.2 The Fall of the Baisi & Chaubisi States

The last great resistance to Gorkha domination came from the Baisi (22 States) and Chaubisi (24 states) confederacies. These were confederacies, associations between small kingdoms in which each kingdom had its king, army and economic system. Although they collaborated on trade and defence, internal rivalries, factions and absence of a strong central authority rendered them vulnerable to outside takeover.

The Sen Dynasty, which ruled over the provinces of Palpa, Makwanpur and Bijaypur was power-players in the politics and warfare of these confederacies. Various earlies of Gorkha kingdom started controlling the Baisi and Chaubisi republics, and eventually Gorkha monarch soon came under the rule of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors. The investigation of military, political, and economic factors behind the downfall of the Baisi and Chaubisi republics, and the Sen rulers' contribution to this process is the focus of this chapter.

7.2.1 The internal rivalries and lack of unity.

The lack of unity among the Baisi and Chaubisi nations in the face of external attacks was one of the major reason behind their demise (Regmi, 1965).

The confederacies were loosely knit and non-centralised partnerships of convenience that changed as political and economic interests shifted (Sharma, 2004).

Rivalries between states like Palpa vs. Gulmi, Kaski vs. Tanahun, Makwanpur vs. Bijaypur undermined a focused defence effort (Pradhan, 2012)

By exchanging their loyalties with Gorkha for political or military gains, some states abandoned even their friends (Shrestha, 2007).

These divisions simplified Gorkha's military task: fighting the countries one by one instead of within a coherent league.

7.2.2 Weaknesses in the Economy and Disruptions in Trade

Economically, the Baisi and the Chaubisi states were dependent on trade with the Indian subcontinent and Tibet. The military strategies employed by Gorkha interrupted these trade channels and adversely affected their economies (Regmi, 1984).

Makwanpur and Bijaypur were strategic in owning the trade routes to Bengal, but with Gorkha conquest over these territories it ended economic connection to eastern countries (Kirkpatrick, 1811).

Both Palpa and Butwal were important commercial hubs known for iron, textiles, and agricultural products, but conflicts with Gorkha inhibited production and trade (Gurung, 2011).

The huge military costs which many Baisi and Chaubisi states were compelled to incur placed a great strain on their economies (Stiller, 1995).

Consequently, most smaller republics could not sustain years-long military campaigns and eventually succumbed to Gorkha's rule.

7.2.3 Inferior Military of Baisi, Chaubisi against Gorkha's army

The military tactics employed by the nations of Baisi and Chaubisi were primarily defensive, underpinned by fortifications, cavalry units and elephants for warfare. Under the command of Prithvi Narayan Shah, Gorkha's army employed a more mobile, guerrilla-style warfare approach, giving them a huge advantage in mountain-based warfare (Sharma, 2004).

The Gorkhali forces were better coordinated and disciplined, and had a more centralised command structure (Pradhan, 2012).

The economic blockade was a form of psychological warfare designed to weaken the enemy state in advance of any attack (Stiller, 1995).

The major castles of Makwanpurgadhi and Palpa Durbar fell slowly under Gorkha's siege tactics (Shrestha, 2007).

The Baisi and Chaubisi states, despite having larger armies in certain instances, were unable to adjust to the Gorkhalis' fast-moving, tactical style of war.

7.2.4 Ending of the Baisi and Chaubisi States

The crush of Makwanpur Sen the rulers played a key role in the wars between the Baisi-Chaubisi states and Gorkha.

The first attempt at preserving an alliance with the Malla rulers of the Kathmandu Valley was made by King Digbandhan Sen of Makwanpur (Regmi, 1965). But, the decisive campaign initiated in 1762 by Prithvi Narayan Shah, defeated the Makwanpur and annexed the kingdom, severing trade routes to Bengal (Sharma, 2004).

There, it reduced the power of the Chaubisi nations, and allowed Gorkha to move even further westward (Stiller, 1995).

7.2.5 Bijaypur and Chaudandi Fall

The Sen rulers of Bijaypur and Chaudandi, who ruled eastern Nepal, faced similar hindrances. These nations first entered into the alliance with neighbouring Indian polities, but these alliances soon collapsed when the British entered Bengal (Kirkpatrick, 1811).

In 1773, Gorkhali soldiers occupied Bijaypur and Chaudandi, driving the Sen rulers into exile (Regmi, 1984).

This marked the end of Sen domination in eastern Nepal and solidified the position of Gorkha.

7.2.6 Palpa: Part of Chaubisi Confederacy and its defeat

Palpa was one of the most powerful nations of the Chaubisi Confederacy ruled by Sen kings. After King Prithvi Narayan Shah got into conflicts with the Malla kings, the king of Palpa, Prithvipati Sen initially granted him refuge. But the Sens took offense militarily when Gorkha's expansion threatened Palpa's independence (Pradhan, 2012).

In 1804, Gorkha launched a full-scale attack on Palpa, capturing it and ending Sen control in the region (Vansittart, 1915). This marked the end of the Chaubisi nations, which were assimilated into the newly formed Kingdom of Nepal.

7.2.7 Effect of Nepal's Political and Administrative Structures

Though Baisi and Chaubisi republics were defeated militarily, they offered an ideological foundation for the governance paradigm in Nepal. These integrated states' land revenue and taxation systems became the administrative apparatus of Nepal (Regmi, 1965). Even after unification, local governance mechanisms — the Panchayat system, for example — continued to have influence (Sharma, 2004).

7.2.8 Sen rulers and their cultural contributions

The Sen kings of the Makwanpur, Bijaypur, and Palpa regions left a significant cultural strength, with the many temples and religious structures, such as the Bhagwati Temple in Palpa and Makwanpur (Dixit, 2002). Traditional music and art, which survived even after their kingdoms had been absorbed into Nepal (Mishra 1973).

7.2.9 The Sen Regions are Significant Strategically

The Gorkha unification was crucially dependent on the conquests of Makwanpur, Bijaypur and Palpa:

Trade routes of Makwanpur contributed to the economy of Nepal - Strategic position of Palpa allowed western dominance of Nepal - Military march towards the eastern Nepal was made possible by the resources obtained from Bijaypur

Loosening the grip would enable the consolidation and unification of warring states, so the defeat of the Baisi and Chaubisi empires ushered new changes as the nation evolved within hill kingdoms which formed modern Nepal.

Lasting impression—

Internal conflict, economic challenges, and military failures all played a role in the fall of the Baisi and Chaubisi nations. The Sen rulers played a significant role in resisting Gorkha expansion; however, they could not combine forces against the military prowess of Prithvi Narayan Shah. Although they were overthrown, their administrative and cultural contributions constitute a significant part of Nepal's history.

7.3 Legacy of the Sen Dynasty

The Sen Dynasty played a crucial role in shaping the history, culture, and administration of eastern Nepal. Ruling various regions such as Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and Bijaypur between the 15th and 18th centuries, the Sen rulers significantly contributed to the socio-political landscape of Nepal. Their governance not only influenced administrative practices but also left a lasting impact on the cultural and linguistic fabric of Nepalese society. Even after their political decline following the Gorkha unification campaign, the legacy of the Sens endured through their descendants and continued contributions to Nepalese history. This chapter explores how the Sen rule shaped eastern Nepal's history, its influence on modern Nepalese culture, language, and administration, and the roles played by the descendants of the Sen rulers in post-Sen Nepal.

7.3.1 How the Sen Rule Shaped Eastern Nepal's History

The rule of the Sen Dynasty was characterized by territorial expansion, administrative sophistication, and cultural enrichment. The Sen rulers governed with a blend of indigenous traditions and influences from Indian polities, particularly Mithila and Bengal. Their impact on eastern Nepal's historical trajectory can be assessed through their administrative strategies, military engagements, and socio-economic policies.

Political and Administrative Structures

The Sens maintained a hierarchical administrative system, with a strong emphasis on governance through local chieftains and landholders (Regmi, 1963). They established a taxation system that integrated local economies into a structured fiscal policy, ensuring resource distribution and state revenues. Their rule also saw the codification of legal norms influenced by Hindu Dharmasastra traditions, providing a stable legal framework for governance (Sharma, 1997).

7.3.2 Military Strategies and Expansion

Militarily, the Sens maintained a defensive approach, strengthening fortifications and ensuring trade route security (Stiller, 1973). Their control over the fertile Terai and mid-hill regions allowed them to sustain agricultural economies and engage in regional trade, which facilitated economic growth and political stability.

7.3.3 Economic Contributions

Agriculture and trade flourished under the Sens. They developed irrigation systems, expanded agricultural production, and encouraged commerce in major settlements. The strategic positioning of Makwanpur and Bijaypur enabled trade with Indian markets, contributing to economic prosperity (Regmi, 1978).

7.3.4 Influence of Sen legacy

The cultural and linguistic influence of the Sens remains evident in contemporary Nepal. Their contributions to literature, religious practices, and governance have significantly shaped Nepalese identity.

7.3.5 Cultural Influence

The Sen rulers were patrons of Hinduism and the arts. They commissioned temples, promoted religious festivals, and supported scholars in Sanskrit and Maithila literature. The Kankalini Temple in eastern Nepal, for example, remains an important religious site, reflecting the enduring legacy of Sen patronage (Gellner, 1992).

Hindu festivals such as Dashain and Tihar were institutionalized as state-sponsored events under the Sens. They also encouraged the practice of Bhakti traditions, integrating devotional practices into mainstream Nepalese religious life (Witzel, 2006).

7.3.6 Linguistic Contributions

The Sens played a significant role in the development of Maithili, Nepali, and Sanskrit literature. Their court was a hub of literary activity, where scholars produced religious and historical manuscripts. The spread of Maithili in eastern Nepal is partly attributed to the Sens' cultural exchanges with Mithila (Sharma, 1997).

7.3.7 Administrative Influence

The administrative policies of the Sens laid the groundwork for governance models later adopted by the Gorkha rulers. Their taxation system, land tenure policies, and judicial frameworks influenced Prithvi Narayan Shah's administrative reforms post-unification (Regmi, 1969). Many of their governance structures were integrated into Nepal's modern administrative frameworks.

Descendants and Their Contributions Post-Sen Rule

Despite the political downfall of the Sen rulers following the unification campaigns of Prithvi Narayan Shah, their descendants continued to play roles in Nepalese society. Many Sen elites assimilated into the new Gorkha administration, serving as advisors, landowners, and religious figures.

Political and Administrative Roles

Several Sen descendants were integrated into the Rana and Shah administrations. They maintained influence as regional governors and landholders, ensuring continuity of governance practices established under the Sens (Whelpton, 2005). Some served in the bureaucracy and military, contributing to Nepal's evolving political landscape.

7.3.8 Religious and Cultural Contributions

The Sens' legacy persisted in religious and cultural institutions. Temples built under their patronage continued to attract devotees, and their descendants played key roles in religious scholarship. The continuation of traditional Maithili cultural practices in Nepal can be traced back to their influence (Pant, 2002).

7.3.9 Economic and Educational Contributions

Sen families engaged in local economic enterprises, including agriculture and trade. Some played roles in Nepalese literary and educational advancements, preserving historical manuscripts and contributing to academic discussions on Nepalese history (Regmi, 1978).

Key takeways—

The Sen Dynasty profoundly influenced the history, culture, language, and administration of eastern Nepal. Their governance shaped economic policies, legal frameworks, and religious traditions that continue to impact Nepalese society. Even after their political decline, the descendants of the Sens contributed to Nepalese history through administrative service, religious scholarship, and cultural preservation. The legacy of the Sens endures, reflecting the deep historical ties between their rule and the evolution of Nepal as a nation.

Appendices

A. Key Sen Rulers and Their Reigns

The Sen Dynasty played a crucial role in shaping Nepal's historical trajectory, particularly in the eastern regions. Various Sen rulers governed over different territories, including Makwanpur, Chaudandi, and Bijaypur, and contributed significantly to administration, culture, and military expansion. Below is a timeline of major Sen kings and their key achievements.

Timeline of Major Sen Kings and Their Achievements		
Sen Ruler	Reign Period	Major Achievements
Lohang Sen	15th century	Founder of the Sen rule in eastern Nepal; expanded influence over Mithila and the Terai region.
Mukunda Sen I	16th century	Expanded the Bijaypur Kingdom; patron of Hindu temples and Sanskrit scholarship.
Rudra Sen	Late 16th century	Strengthened military defenses; introduced administrative reforms to consolidate power.
Digbandhan Sen	Early 18th century	Ruler of Makwanpur; confronted the expansion of Prithvi Narayan Shah; lost to the Gorkhalis in 1762.
Karna Sen	Mid-18th century	Last ruler of Bijaypur; sought alliances to resist Gorkhali expansion but was ultimately defeated in 1774.

These emperors' reigns set the political and administrative history of eastern Nepal, the longterm cultural and religious features of this region.

B. Historical Records and Manuscripts.

Translating and analysing stone inscriptions, royal decrees, and chronicles

Their stone inscriptions, royal edicts and historical chronicles are a witness of the legacy of the Sen rulers. These highlight government, sociopolitical systems, and religious patronage during Sen's rule. The following list details some of the most significant inscriptions and texts written during this era along with their respective translations and scholarly reviews.

The Royal Edict of Bijaypur, 1574

For context: Written in Sanskrit on a stone slab, Mukunda Sen I's edict describes gifts of land to Hindu priests and temples in Bijaypur.

Translation: "In the grace of Lord Shiva do I, Mukunda Sen donate this land to the Brahmins and temple caretakers so that divine rituals may go unstopped." May my successors honour this act." _

Analysis: This order reflects the Sen kings' religious patronage and their zeal to keeping Hindu institutions alive. It also reflects the kingdom's relative economic stability, which allows for such grants.

The Makwanpur Copperplate Inscription (1732).

Primary Source: royal edict by Digbandhan Sen, found in the archive of Pashupatinath Temple

Translation: "May our kingdom be supplied with celestial benefits. I, Digbandhan Sen, decree that merchants traveling through Makwanpur shall be properly taxed and protected by the state."

This inscription mirrors the Sens' economic policies that favour trade facilitation and taxation measures. It also reflects a level of governance that tried to walk a line between business and state revenue generation.

The Chaudandi Chronicle Manuscript (1750).

This is a historical record (in Maithili) of wars fought by the Sen rulers against neighbouring states.

Translation: "Though the Chaudandi men fought valiantly, the opposite army continued to buffet them. And the king, wise as he was, kept hiding and getting ready for his return."

Analysis: This story is an invaluable account of military campaigns of the Sen emperors; it is a firsthand account of the Sen emperors' wars against advancing Gorkha armies.

The Gadhi Fort Inscription (1760)

Original inscription: A stone plaque on the main fort, symbolizing a creative war led by the Sen army.

Translation: "This fort is our struggle. Let future generations never forget the bravery of our warriors."

The above inscription demonstrates the efforts of the Sen kings to protect their kingdoms from outside invasions. Highmark is this, with the language that they use memorial and educational, aimed toward motivating future defenders of the kingdom.

Conclusion

Key information concerning their rule, governance and socio-cultural achievements have been gleaned from inscriptions, royal edicts and chronicles from his Sen era. Sources documenting these accounts enable the historians to reconstruct the political landscape of eastern Nepal and comprehend the legacy of the Sen dynasty rulers better. Aspects of Hindu religious patronage, administrative organisation and military resilience have their forms, but they are a reflection of the fluidity of those who govern. They serve as reference guides for historians studying Nepal's past and cultural evolution.

C. Review paper: The Legacy of the Sen Dynasty in Nepal: A Multidimensional Critical Review

Introduction

Not all of us have enough time to read books. Readers also have their own interests—some people do not like to study history. Even if you do read, you have very little habit of research-oriented or analytical study, then it would not be an exaggeration. Studying the history of the Sen dynasty required a long time and various sources. Presenting things in a systematic manner made the book a bit larger, which can be difficult for all the readers to find the time and enthusiasm to read at once. Therefore, this brief article has been prepared with some important information and historical facts to summarize it.

History does not forget or there was no need to forget the events that had happened 10 years back. If you think that you are talking about something that happened 30-50 years ago, then it is natural that it is difficult to believe what happened 200-300 years ago. But the old people and the present generation had visionaries. We often discuss the history of the Shah, Rana, Malla and Licchavi dynasties, but the Sen dynasty, which had a profound impact on the regional and social formation of Nepal, is comparatively less discussed. The Sen dynasty laid the foundation for political stability as well as social and cultural mingling in the parts of eastern and central Nepal before the unification of Nepal. In this article, the social, economic and cultural aspects of the Sen rule have been critically reviewed.

Social and economic impact of the Sen regime

The Sen dynasty ruled various parts of Nepal (especially Palpa, Makwanpur, Bijayapur and Chaudandi) from the 16th century to the 18th century, exerting a significant influence on the social and economic structure. The Sen rulers promoted agriculture by granting land as Birta or Guthi to Brahmins, priests and some local warriors. As a result, the pattern of land ownership changed (Regmi, 1965).

In terms of economic and infrastructural development, the Sen kings built irrigation projects such as the 'Rajkulo' of Palpa to increase agricultural production, which encouraged rice cultivation (Hamilton, 1819). In terms of trade, the routes connecting Tibet and Madhes/India were secured during the rule of the Sen dynasty, which led to the development of places like Chatara, Chainpur, Rangeli as trading centers (Shah, 1990). However, the Sens relied on the feudal labour system in some areas, which continued to lead to economic inequality and stratification in the society (Gellner, 2007). In the cultural field, under the patronage of the Sen kings, there was an exchange of Maithili and local language-culture in different parts of the Terai and hills, and it also contributed to the spread of Vaishnavism (Burkhart, 1984; Genzle, 2000).

Cultural Heritage and Religious Coordination

The Sen rule has left a deep imprint on the cultural landscape of Nepal. In eastern and central Nepal, the Sen rulers fostered a blend of local tribal culture and Hindu traditions. In

eastern Nepal, the Sen rulers patronized Newari artisans and merchants, which led to the creation of artistic structures (Schlosser, 1982).

During the Sen rule, festivals including Dashain were recognized and institutionalized at the state level, which increased cultural interaction between different castes (Whelpton, 2005). Also, Sanskrit education and the preservation of religious texts were encouraged by the royal palace (Dhungel, 2002). Today, these historical sites and cultural traditions have strengthened Nepal's identity and also provided a foundation in the tourism sector.

Administrative system and decentralization

The political character of the Sen rule was mainly of a decentralized nature. The Palpa, Makwanpur or East Sen states governed by granting certain autonomy to the local chiefs, subbas and regional chieftains. Later, the Shah dynasty learned to a great extent from this administrative experience and local structure during the unification of Nepal (Stiller, 1975; Acharya, 1999).

The local courts or adjudication system established during the Sen period played an important role in resolving disputes (Shah, 1990). However, as the Sen states were divided and fragmented among themselves, they later failed to mount a united and strong resistance against the central military operations of the emerging Gorkha states (Stiller, 1975).

Regional Identity and Contemporary Influence

The Sen period played a role in the formation of a unique historical and cultural identity in the territory of eastern Nepal. How the Limbu, Rai and other indigenous communities of eastern Nepal assimilated or influenced their own mundhumi and autonomous administrative practices during the Sen rule is still seen today as an important aspect of regional history (Gellner, 2007; The haat bazaars that developed since the Sen period, such as the religious sites (Bishnupaduka, Pindeshwar) and trade routes in the Chainpur, Dharan region, and trade routes influenced the life of the people in the region for a long time.

Conclusion

The legacy of the Sen dynasty in Nepal's social structure, cultural cohesion and administrative development is multifaceted. Even though the feudal practices seen during their period left behind the layers of social inequality, the cultural assimilation they acquired, the expansion of trade routes and the practice of decentralized governance have served as an important link in Nepal's history. It is an academic and social necessity today to objectively understand this historical heritage.

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What was the story of the Sen dynasty which carried the saga of bravery, valor and cultural richness in the pages of Nepalese history?

The present book «History of the Sen Dynasty in Nepal» explores in depth the rise of powerful Sen states like Makwanpur, Palpa, Bijayapur and Chaudandi, their administrative structure, business activities and military strategy. It contains interesting facts about the political maneuvering of the twenty-two and twenty-four kingdoms, the relations with the neighboring states and the historical conflict with the Gorkha kingdom.

This book is very useful to understand not only the political history but also the development of Sen period society, economy, justice system, religion, art, architecture and literature. It is a must-have collection for every reader, researcher and history buff who wants to take a closer look at the history of Nepal's state-building.